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INTERPRETATIONS
OF
LIFE AND RELIGION

WALTON W. BATTERSHALL

1. Sermons.

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INTERPRETATIONS
OF
LIFE AND RELIGION

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OF

LIFE AND RELIGION

BY
WALTON W. BATTERSHALL, D.D.

RECTOR OF ST. PETER'S CHURCH, ALBANY

*To speak the word of God afresh in each age,
in accordance with both the novelty of the age and
the eternal antiquity of the truth . . .*

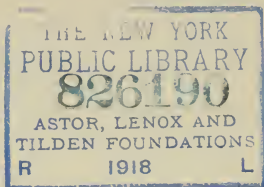
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PREFATORY NOTE.

THESE sermons, with three exceptions, were preached in St. Andrew's Dune-Church, Southampton, Long Island, and are published at the request of the Trustees and Congregation. The exceptions are sermons II., VII., and XVII., which are included in order to round out the circle of thought.

The volume is put forth in the hope that it may contain some word, which shall prove helpful to those who, amid the theological confusions of the day, and the affirmations and silences of its science, are trying to find foothold for faith and sanction for the moral and spiritual life.

W. W. B.

ST. PETER'S RECTORY,
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I.

The Origin of Prayer.

I.

THE ORIGIN OF PRAYER.

Out of the deep have I called unto Thee, O Lord.

Ps. cxxx. 1.

IT is strange how the words of those old Hebrew songs strike at the roots of things. The most recent of them were written at least twenty-four centuries ago, yet they are as fresh and vital as if they were penned yesterday. They are the utterances of men who were neither philosophers nor theologians nor saints; yet they lay bare the inmost springs of life, they supply facts and experiences that are built into the foundation-walls of Christian theology, they have been woven into the hymns and prayers of nineteen centuries of Christian history. The secret of their vitality and power lies in the fact that they are frank, genuine words, wrung from men who glanced keenly into the depths and heights of their life, and discerned the eternal facts that formed the background from

which their life was thrust, and along which it moved. They utter the perennial voice of the soul of man, crying from the abysses of his life to the unseen Power from which his life outflows. This is the reason that those antique Hebrew canticles have become the temple-hymns of the Christian Church and the road-songs of the Christian pilgrim through the ages.

The highest poetry is at once the deepest philosophy and the truest religion. The roots of all three interlace. They are buried in the bottommost facts of life. Childhood, with its young eyes, oftentimes discerns these facts more clearly than the eyes which are accustomed to look at things through the dust of the world's toil and the fog of the world's thought. The world in its childhood babbled words of the keenest vision; and, as long as men value poetry that goes beneath the crust of things, that deals with the elemental forces of our nature, that takes the soul of man, and fashions it into a flute or bugle so that the divine breath blows through it in immortal music; as long as men want tender or tragic

words in which to voice the deepest things in their hearts, and the inevitable things in their life,—so long will the world cling to that old Hebrew Psalter as its hand-book of prayer and worship.

“Out of the deep have I called unto Thee, O Lord.” I hardly dare to touch these words, they stand so complete in their richness of suggestion. They have been recited by priestly lips in the ears of men and women, who have found in them the only voice that they could lift from the sullen waves that were flowing over them, the waves of sorrow, of sudden disaster, of wasting disease; the waves of the river of death, which were rising about them, and upon which they were drifting out to the great ocean, of which we know so little, except that God broods over it, and that His Christ stands in His love and splendor on the farther shore.

But in fact these words are as true to those who are in the strength and joy of life as to the suffering and the dying. Let us take them broadly, in their fullest reach of meaning. They indicate a truth which the world continually overlooks, which Christians sometimes

forget; the origin and justification of prayer, the depths in which it is born, and from which it arises.

Some time ago an eminent man, whose recent death marks a conspicuous loss in the world of letters, to whom, however, we are indebted for brilliant science rather than profound metaphysic, proposed a prayer-test. A group of people who believed in prayer were to unite in supplication for the recovery of patients in a certain hospital, and at the end of a fixed period their condition was to be compared with the condition of patients in another hospital, for whose recovery no prayers were offered. The event was to determine the efficacy of prayer. The proposition sounds plausible, does it not? It is so practical, so scientific. Yet I can imagine nothing so utterly crass and shallow, so obtrusively a symptom of the Philistinism which vulgarizes the religious thought of the day. To propose that the efficacy of prayer should be tested by methods similar to those by which we test the capacity of a nail-making machine, or the speed of a steamship, simply shows that the proposer

has yet to take his first lesson in the philosophy of prayer.

Men pray to-day, and have prayed through the centuries, not at the command of the Bible, or the Church, nor in view of utilities that can be measured by fever-thermometers or credits on bank-accounts. They pray to God as instinctively and inevitably as the root under ground prays to the sunbeam in the sky. The Bible discloses those relations between God and man which justify prayer. Its language is saturated with prayer. It prescribes the duty of prayer, and it gives order and method to the discharge of the duty. The Church of Christ is the divine world-prayer crystallized in history. It exists as the organic prayer of humanity and God's response to that prayer. It recognizes prayer as the breath of its life, and it summons men to its shrines in order that their prayer may find rich and full voice in its immemorial liturgies and litanies. But behind the Bible and the Church lies the instinct of prayer, coeval with human life, and outflowing from its deepest springs. "Out of the deep have I called unto Thee, O Lord!"

No words can express so profoundly and accurately the origin and rationale of prayer.

What the poet meant by his expression "the deep," I know not. If the psalm were written by David, there were certainly passages in his life which account for the phrase. In his storm-driven history, he was plunged into depths of peril and remorse from which only strong cries would seem to reach the ear of God. If the psalm, as is probable, had some unknown author of the period of the Babylonian captivity, we may well suppose that a devout Jew, exiled from his native land and Jehovah's temple, had occasion to offer many a prayer from the midst of experiences which seemed to him like the inflow of a torrent.

But whatever the original reference of the phrase "Out of the deep," it comes to us with a larger meaning than either the king or the exile could apprehend. It is not an incident of life, it is life itself that constitutes for us the deep, out of which we cry. We of this modern world have caught, as men never before have caught, a sense of the mystery of life. Men have lost, perhaps forever,

the art of unconscious objective living, the habit of looking upon life as a child looks upon its mother, gratefully accepting her gifts and asking no questions. We have well-nigh tortured all beauty and joy out of life by our fierce, relentless probings. In return we have captured here and there a fact, a force, a law, a glimpse of the methods by which life fulfils itself. Our sciences and philosophies have broadened our conceptions. To us life is a larger, richer thing than to our fathers. But, after all, our deepest questions are unanswered. There is no possibility of their answer. What is life? What is its purpose? Whence did it come? Whither does it go? Why am I here, living to-day, a conscious, sentient, thinking drop in the mighty torrent of life that pours unceasingly from the exhaustless bosom of nature? I am borne on the flow of the torrent. Whence? Whither? Wherefore? These are questions a man asks, when he disengages himself from the rush of the world, and tries to find some meaning for his life. It may be an unhealthy business; but never were men so busy at it as now. The difficulty is that life echoes

back our questions unanswered. It refuses to explain itself. We are simply submerged in the stream which flows through nature, as the planets roll in their orbits, and the waves of light pulse through the ether.

What remains? That mystery, which we call prayer, almost as great a mystery as life itself. From the one mystery comes the other. "Out of the deep have I called unto Thee, O Lord." From the earliest ages, men have dimly felt the mystery of life and have found refuge in the mystery of prayer. All the religions of the race have grown on this stalk. The religion of Christ is the consummate and final flower into which the stalk has blossomed. It is the revelation of God; yes, and more profoundly the revelation of God because it is the revelation of man. Man can never outgrow it, because he can never outgrow his need of prayer. The expansions of our knowledge only reveal the boundaries of our ignorance. From the deep that is below, we must needs cry to the deep that is above. We are tossed between two profundities, life and God. The one testifies to the other, and from the one we cry

to the other. This is the philosophy of prayer. Never did the world need it so much as to-day.

But life, which is a fathomless deep, has within it a deeper deep, into which we must glance, if we would probe the origin and motive of prayer.

There is a note in that old psalm which sounds so insistently through the brief composition that we cannot but recognize it as the key-note. It is struck clear and full in the third verse : "If thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss, O Lord, who may abide it?" Has that note lost its value in our modern conceptions of prayer? Has the fact to which it refers dropped out of life? Nay, life comes to us with all its inheritances unspent.

The whence and whitherward of life is mystery enough. But besides this is a mystery deeper still, the mystery of sin. All along, with the deepening consciousness of good and evil,—the first chapters of Genesis shadow forth the beginnings of that consciousness,—men have discerned the malignant force which

tainted their life. The great religions of the world expressed in sacrifices and rituals of atonement, oftentimes grotesque and horrible, their sense of moral failure and guilt. This sense is rooted in the conscience, and it has deepened as the life of the conscience has deepened. It finds expression in the meditations of Marcus Aurelius. It sends out a long, agonizing cry from the pages of St. Paul. The religion whose elemental facts and implications he, more than any other man, threw into architectonic form, disclosed the subtilty and virulence of the taint which had fastened on human nature. In giving to men a new sense of God, it gave them a new sense of sin. All along its history, those who have climbed furthest up its spiritual heights, its saints and heroes, have glanced with the most shuddering fear down the spiritual chasms on whose verge they trod.

There are those to-day who are telling us that sin is a phantom, a ghost flitting about ancient graveyards of thought. Original sin, they say, is a fiction invented by the theologians. In fact there is no sin. There are only

mistakes and diseases and follies and vices and crimes. Well, it would seem as if it were merely a battle of names; and it would seem, moreover, as if the Bible and Christian theology had anticipated the most significant discoveries of our science; had, in their doctrine of original sin, antedated, by at least a thousand years, the scientific doctrine of heredity, the cornerstone of our modern biology. In this, as in some other matters, "Faith," to quote the words of St. Augustine, "has held the door open for science to enter in."

The German naturalist Büchner, in his book, "Man in the Past, the Present, and the Future," writes these profound words: "It is only in man that the world becomes conscious to such a degree that it rises out of its previous dream-like natural existence. Struggle therefore rages on the domain of morals as violently as it formerly did on the physical field."

And another German scholar, Frauenstadt, in his "Religion of Nature," confesses: "In the self-assertion of the flesh against the spirit I recognize sin; and since man is by nature subject to this tyranny of the flesh, it follows that

he is by nature sinful; and the sinful nature propagating itself, there arises an original sinfulness."

Our scientific teachers, however they may parley with words, bear witness to the fact and transmission of sin. But there are others who belittle and scoff at the Christian sense of sin. They tell us that it kills the free, careless joy of life to which we are entitled, and the accents of which we catch in the lighter forms of classic art and letters. Certain schools of æsthetics are taking reckless revenges on the repressions and denials with which narrow phases of ethics and religion have tried to stifle the passion for beauty. They forget the more majestic voices which even that old world uttered in its epics and tragedies; and they forget the new visions and the new forces that Christ has given to the conscience of men. No, we cannot reclaim those antique days. Theocritus and Horace sound only the most trivial notes in the psalm of our modern life. It is set to a deeper, grander music than their thin reeds can reach. We cannot live that old faun-like life, even if we would. The soul whose eyes Christ has

anointed can never be repaganized. It has caught glimpses of God which have taught it horror of sin. It cannot sin laughingly. However it may deliver itself to sin, from the depths of its illumined and quickened conscience shapes arise, which fill it with scorn of self, and, despite itself, it stretches out pleading hands to the Eternal Righteousness, the vision of which, once given, forever remains to torture or to heal.

The laurelled poet, who set to such high, clear notes the problems and challenges of our modern life, who sang to the last generation, and has bequeathed to this an unfilled throne, in his "Palace of Art," has painted the world of to-day in its eager quest of knowledge and beauty :

"I built my soul a lordly pleasure-house,
Wherein at ease for aye to dwell.
I said, 'O Soul, make merry and carouse,
Dear Soul, for all is well.'

"To which my Soul made answer readily :
' Trust me, in bliss I shall abide
In this great mansion, that is built for me,
So royal-rich and wide.'

“ Full oft the riddle of the painful earth
 Flashed through her as she sat alone,
But not the less held she her solemn mirth
 And intellectual throne

“ Of full-sphered contemplation. So three years
 She throve, but on the fourth she fell
Like Herod, when the shout was in his ears,
 Struck through with pangs of hell.

“ She howled aloud, ‘ I am on fire within.
 There comes no murmur of reply.
What is it that will take away my sin,
 And save me lest I die ? ’ ”

In this modern music do you not catch an echo of that old Hebrew psalm? “ Out of the deep have I called unto Thee, O Lord.” And in the life about you and within you, do you not hear the moan of the deep? It surges more restlessly than ever in the heart of man. Do you not hear the cry? It may not be as simple and direct; but it is more piteous, more strenuous than the cry of those olden days.

The mystery of life, the mystery of sin; they have not changed; they have only deepened. They are real to us; they are close to us; but more real and closer still is the mystery of God.

II.

The Struggle for Existence.

II.

THE STRUGGLE FOR EXISTENCE.

On earth peace. — ST. LUKE ii. 14.

THIS note from the cradle-hymn of Christ gives the key-note of His mission. It suggests moreover a fundamental question in regard to human life. Let me state it. It is not only fundamental, it is practical. The answer we give to it affects our habitual thought, our ideas of right and wrong, our daily conduct, the whole structure and purpose of our social organization.

What is the natural state of man? In other words, what is the force that has pushed him upward in the evolution of life? What is the process by which he has acquired his faculties, and trained his powers, and built up his sciences, and matured his civilizations? Peace, or war? The philosophy of life which this age has formulated, with which the books,

the periodicals, the thought, the conversation of the day is saturated, says *war*. Life, it maintains, is simply a conflict, a struggle for existence. The struggle, in every type of being, whether shrub or man, is a fight for place and food. And it gives to the successful competitor vigor and increase of faculty, by which it climbs to higher place and gathers more abundant food. In the struggle, the strong, of course, beat down, crowd out and outlive the weak.

This, we are told, is Nature's way of educating St. Paul and Shakespeare from the fiery mist of chaos. This is her method of building up the complex structures of the civilization of this nineteenth century from the savagery and misery that, ages ago, kept itself alive on the acorns of the German forest. Is this true? Is competition the sole law of life? If this be so, it is a law that runs through life from beginning to end, from top to bottom. It accounts for life in its elemental features to-day, just as it accounts for life when uncouth monsters tore each other in the silurian slime. In fact, there are those who have the courage

of their theory, and do not hesitate to make the struggle for existence the motive-power of all human history, the law of all human conduct. The struggle in these modern days is disguised, they say. The weapons are changed. Men do not fight now with claws and fangs, however useful they once may have been in the evolution of the race. The age of sword and dagger has been supplanted by the age of cannon and rifle; and this, in turn, is fast giving way to the age of brain and wealth. But on new fields, and with new weapons, the fight goes on. Man is the wolf of man. He preys on his fellows. He banquets on their famine. Life is organized on this basis. What we call education is simply a training for the fight. Industry, commerce, law, government is simply the method of it. Success in life simply means that the victor has beaten down his foe, and has borne to his tent the spoils of the vanquished.

This is a philosophy of life which, in its logical applications, is not generally accepted. It is certain that its logical applications will never be accepted in a civilization that

bears the name of Christ. But in certain quarters it is frankly enunciated, and, with much learning, promulgated. It is not altogether new. Indeed, it hangs its claim to be a full and real philosophy of life upon the fact that it can cite such a mass of primitive tradition, as well as such a stretch of recorded history, in confirmation of its truth. Its antiquity is unquestionable. So in this age of science, which is searching for the origins of things, and confessedly is trying to account for man by studying the organism and habits of brutes, this theory has won a certain vogue and respectability by its claim to be the scientific explanation of life. It certainly has the merit of simplicity. It is a rough and ready method of branding the world with the devil's mark, and handing it over to its master. If it were confined to our scientific speculations, it would not be so bad. At the worst, it would be a mistake which, in the long run, Science herself would correct. But the difficulty is that it is a theory which affects the moral attitude of men in the actual business of life. Being a theory which professes to explain life, it

necessarily shapes life. And even if I seem thereby to make some concession to its truth, let me say that it finds a congenial soil in certain instincts of our nature. It is so easy for a man to excuse his selfishness and cruelty by calling it the necessity of life and the law of the world.

Do we see nothing of this in men who feel their strength, and are determined to succeed in trade, in politics and in the rivalries of society? Generally they fight behind the bulwarks of the law. In the main, the process and results of the fight are in the interests of the common good. But go into the market-place. Listen to the conversation, the maxims, the exposition of the rules of the game. Do we not find plenty of men, upright men, even kind-hearted men, whose conception of life is a battle with their fellows? And if the strong sometimes organize ruin and disaster for their selfish ends, do not the weak as often drift into crime, and both alike plead the excuse of the struggle for existence?

How can there be "peace on earth" if the whole process of life be war? Ah! we are told,

Christ came to lift mankind from a state of nature to a state of grace, to destroy the works of the devil, to make love instead of selfishness the law of life. Thus the errand of Christ authenticates the seraphic song. But what hope is there that Christ will fulfil His errand, if God has made this earth a battlefield for His creatures? Evidently there is a mistake somewhere; and the mistake is in this theory, which makes war the law of nature. If we look closely we shall find that it is one of our old friends, so common in the history of the world's thought, a half-truth, dressed up in the clothes, and made to do the duty, of a whole truth.

Unquestionably, Nature selects and perpetuates her best products, her strongest types. Thus the power of God in her has climbed to higher organisms of life. Thus the human race has made its advance through the centuries. In this sense there is a struggle for existence. But even the struggle can be as well described by the word "peace" as by the word "war."

Prince Krapotkin, in a recent number of the "Nineteenth Century," gives testimony

on this point. "Happily enough," he says, "competition is not the rule either in the animal world or in mankind. It is limited among animals to exceptional periods, and natural selection finds better fields for its activity. Better conditions are created by the elimination of competition, by means of mutual aid and mutual support. In the great struggle for life, for the greatest possible fulness and intensity of life with the least waste of energy, natural selection continually seeks out the ways precisely for avoiding competition as much as possible." In support of his theory, he cites the social habits of animals, their organization of industry, their love for their species, their mutual care and helpfulness. It is a familiar story, but full of significance. We know that even wild beasts will rescue their wounded comrade at the peril of life. Amid innumerable instances of compassion and mutual service among the lower animals, Darwin cites the case of a blind pelican, which was fed, and well fed, by other pelicans, upon fishes that had to be brought from a distance of thirty miles.

Even among the brute creation there are

echoes of the angels' song. That devil's theory, that war is the primal law of nature, the importation of which into human life serves to excuse its frauds and cruelties, is a slander on our brethren of the air and the forest. We need not fear for the work of Christ in bringing peace on earth. It falls into line with the original work of God.

But surely there is need that men of to-day should yield themselves more fully to the errand and inspiration of Christ. Only too slowly is the world learning the lesson of His cradle-song.

We talk of our Christian civilization. Do you know that two million two hundred and fifty thousand human beings have been slaughtered, and thirteen thousand millions of dollars have been spent by Christian nations in the carnage of war within the last thirty years? But war sometimes is the shortest road to peace. I only say that it is time the world found a less ghastly and expensive one. We have heard of the results of the deep-sea soundings, which have appalled England with the disclosures of the misery and degradation of the

submerged tenth of London. In every great centre of population there are gulfs in which masses of human life have sunk, and lie in nether darkness. Now and then a cry comes up from the depths, and a hand clutches wildly for some floating spar in the agony of men to breathe the air and see the sun. These are the vanquished in the struggle for existence. The world, as it sails on to its secular triumphs, has nothing to say of those whom it has flung overboard on the voyage, except that old pagan cry: "*Væ victis!*" Woe to the conquered!

But Christ has something to say and something to do. His Church, with all its mistakes and the infirmities of the human clay of which it is fashioned, has never forgotten that it is set for the rescue of human life. All along, silently and without observation, it has plunged into the depths to lay hold of men and lift them into the upper sunshine. In all the ages it has been the defender of the weak and the down-trodden. It has brought light and healing into the darkened, wounded lives of men. This has been the secret of the strange love it has won and the strange power it has

wielded. But now, as never before, it is called to gird itself for its work in the world. It cannot fold its arms in the presence of sin and wrong. If it find no organization of goodness adequate to undo the ruin, which the world makes in the human life that it tramples down in its march, it must create the organization, direct it, and breathe into it the breath of the living, pitiful Christ.

Shall we not do our share, in the place and opportunity that God gives us? Shall we not go forth from the altar of Christ with a warmer love for man, with a keener sympathy with the pathos of his life, with brain and hands dedicated to beating back the forces that work his misery? Above all else, let us have no philosophies of despair. Christianity is the religion of love and hope. It sees the face of God in every brother of Christ. It can bring out that face from its foulest soil and disfigurement. By virtue of this, it holds the life of the world in trust. It has done much, but it will do more. It has just begun its history. It bears in its hands the promise of unknown moral fruitage.

III.

Inadequate Theologies.

III.

INADEQUATE THEOLOGIES.

For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it; and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it. — ISAIAH xxviii. 20.

THIS simile was originally applied by the prophet to certain men of Jerusalem, to whom he thus speaks: "Ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves."

I do not know of any men of to-day who can sit for this sombre picture, except two classes: first, those who have dropped the moralities out of their religion, and use it simply as an embroidered mantle to hide their hard, grasping, unclean life; second, those who make no

pretence of religion, and think that they can get the best results of life by throwing judgment and righteousness to the winds. Both classes are small and in bad repute, and one must be pretty far gone who would consciously enroll himself in either. Still, we all have need to be on our guard. It is so easy to take religion by its trappings and decorations, instead of by its bones and sinews; to make it consist simply of speculations and emotions, instead of principles and habits. This is a temptation which insidiously works on certain temperaments. Then, again, there is abroad in the world a sort of satanic philosophy, which maintains that the man who intends to forge to the front and gather in the largest returns of life must not insist on refinements of morality or the more delicate flavors of virtue. In the rush for wealth and luxury, which vulgarizes the age, young men who plunge into the tussle, before they are aware receive and yield to the corrosive taint of this maxim from the devil's Handbook on Success in Life.

In an age like this it is well to get close to stalwart words like those of the prophet:

“Thus saith the Lord God: Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation. Judgment also will I lay to the line and righteousness to the plummet; and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place.” What does he mean? Simply this: The only shrine of religion and life that can shelter a man, that can stand against the hurtling storm and creeping tide, is a structure whose every stone is squared to the plummet of righteousness. In other words, life is organized and stands on the moralities. It achieves success, it attains its highest levels of force and fruition only by virtue of its moral resistance and thrust. This is the true conception of life. Any other conception of life, however plausible it may seem, is, in the phrase of the prophet, “a refuge of lies,” which shall be swept away.

And if this be the truth regarding life, it is doubly the truth regarding that religion which is the divine interpretation of life. It rears its walls and lifts its pinnacles by the plummet of righteousness. It is built on the

lines of the eternal moralities, the common moralities, which keep sweet and wholesome the relations of men. Here you have the divine measuring-rod by which you may test divergent systems of faith, a measuring-rod of inestimable service in these days of challenge and search.

Keeping this fundamental thought of the prophet in mind, let us now find the implications and the applications of that other figure, by which he pictures the false conceptions of religion and life which prevailed in his day. "For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it; and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it."

In the mind of the prophet, a false theory of religion and life is not only a structure that will shake and break beneath the pressure of facts; it is a bed that is altogether too short, and a coverlet that is altogether too narrow for our nature as God made it, and our life as God gives it. It is not only doomed to ultimate ruin; it does not give even temporary rest and warmth.

This is the fact in regard to all false, par-

tial and inadequate conceptions of truth and duty in all ages of the world; but we do not have to hunt very far to find a special application for the words of the Hebrew seer.

In these days, how common a thing is it that the religion which a man inherits, or picks up in his childhood, or gathers on the highways of the world's spiritual life, proves itself "a bed shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it, and a covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it."

Undoubtedly this is not always or even generally the case. However defective their religion may be, most men find it too high for their daily use, and take it with all the compromises and deductions that it allows. They pare it down to its lowest values. It is, perhaps, not too much to say that the mean temperature of most men's lives ranges about the freezing-point of their religion. A puerile, thin, narrow faith is therefore a thousand times better for a man than no faith at all; for, poor as it is, it stands for a higher life than the life that he is living; and it is continually reaching down arms to pull his life upward. More-

over, the religion of our childhood, whatever it may be, with all its crudities and incompleteness, has about it something of the freshness and the dew and the splendor of the dawn; and no enlargement and enrichment will atone for the loss, if the beauty of the morning light does not linger in our vision of God and conception of duty. Our increase of knowledge, and concentration of faculty, and outpush of force in the great fight of the world may choke the wells of our spiritual being, and dim the inward eyes that discern spiritual realities. To get beyond your religion does not necessarily mean that you have outgrown it. It may mean that it is too large and sovereign to keep step with your insistent egotism and lawless vagabondage. This is a contingency which should give us pause. It is a time to put sharp questions to ourselves when we begin to think that our religion is getting too small for us. But the state of things pictured by the bedstead and the coverlet of the prophet is also a possible contingency.

Beyond question, there is a great deal of ignorant, hard, narrow, one-sided religion in

the world. Think how superstition, fanaticism and worldliness have all along dogged the steps of the Religion of Christ. Think of the innumerable sects by which the Christianity of the day has its front broken and its force wasted. They each represent some fragment or discoloration of truth, — not the whole truth, as it lies in solution in the Bible, epitomized in the creeds, organized in the Church, — but some salient fact or doctrine; a nose, or ear, or hand, which has been knocked off from the divine statue of Christianity, and made to do duty for the whole statue. Perhaps all of us, by virtue of our temperament and circumstance, are more or less one-sided and color-blind. A sane, honest man fights against his idiosyncrasies. But it is a bad case for a man when his religion is one-sided and color-blind. And what is he to do when he finds that the peculiar type of Christianity in which he was cradled, the peculiar vision of life in which he was trained, the peculiar set of doctrines which somebody has picked for him out of the Bible, and which has come to him as the essential and exclusive truth, what

is he to do when he discovers that all this is simply a partial statement, a local interpretation, a discoloration and distortion of the large, myriad-sided truth that Christ disclosed to men for the rescue and enrichment of the world's life?

This is the fate of not a few of to-day. "The bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it; and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it." The intolerant, sect-making spirit of a former age, and its crass individualism, have filled the land with short bedsteads of churches and narrow coverlets of creeds. Men with the best intent, and not without pains and perils, carved and wove God's large truth into systems which dislocated it and dwarfed it; so that it cramps human nature and fails to cover the full stature of a man.

They were intense men. They worked in times of theological tumult. They felt the pressure of the abuses and distortions which preceding ages had handed down to them. Essential features of Christ's truth and law had become obscured, had lost their accent in the dominant

faith. There was need of reform, readjustment, a reproclamation of forgotten truths and neglected duties and suppressed freedoms. They worked according to the pressures, the limitations and the lights of their day. The theological and ecclesiastical systems that they elaborated are the result and bear the trace of all these. As exhaustive statements of Christianity, they have the defect of their virtues. They distort in the attempt to remedy distortions. They drop important factors and forces. In the redistribution, they misplace the accents in God's revealed truth. Human life of to-day has gained knowledge, and has drifted into complications, and is disclosing needs and problems of which these one-sided systems, born of protest and controversy, take no count, and for which they provide no satisfaction.

One age pays for the mistakes of a preceding age, pays with high usury; and men of to-day, with their restlessness and questioning and revolt, are paying for the mutilated interpretations of Christianity which they have inherited from a groping and embattled past.

IV.

The Fathers and the Children.

IV.

THE FATHERS AND THE CHILDREN.

And He shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

MALACHI iv. 6.

THIS is the last verse of the Old Testament. The voices which registered the laws, histories, poems and visions through which God broke in upon the struggle and march of the world before Christ, expired in these words. From Malachi to Christ prophetic lips were mute for four hundred years.

It is strange that those who revere the Old Testament as the veritable oracles of God — the Jews, for instance — should maintain that it enunciates the perfect and final religion of mankind. On the contrary, its last words are the distinct and explicit acknowledgment of its

incompleteness. The Old Testament closes with a suspended, half-uttered syllable. It lapses into silence with a promise: "Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And He shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."

These words, spoken of John the Baptist, are based upon a fact in life and a trait of human nature which it is well for us to study in their relation to the mission of the Forerunner of Christ. We all know his place and work in the line of the divine revelations of truth. He came to announce the approach of a new kingdom of God on earth, in which the moral and spiritual life of men was to catch sight of new truth, set itself to new ideals, march to new goals, build itself up into new structures of thought and social organization. He heralded the coming of One Who was to unhinge the gates of the world's history, and swing them on new pivots. This was the high errand of that strange prophet who proclaimed

his message to the crowds in the Judæan wilderness.

Now a man who in any age of the world comes to men with a new truth or a new application of an old truth, creates a ferment in the intellectual or religious or social life of the epoch in which he appears. The prophet of a new idea, whether he be a true prophet or a false prophet, whether his idea be God's truth or the devil's lie, will always set in motion conflicting currents of opinion. Provided the personality of the prophet be commanding, and his idea radical, and the times ripe, the energetic thought of the age will take up his message as a battle-cry, and divide into opposing camps.

If the idea be false, a phantom of the prophet's brain, a half-truth, an unwarranted deduction from facts, a perverted vision of life, of course it will clash with the recognized and accredited truth in the possession of the age. If the idea be true, the recognition of a new fact, or the recapture of a suppressed and forgotten fact, the result of a deeper insight into the heart of things, into the origin and thrust

and destiny of things, it will clash with the conventional fashions of thought, and the traditions in accordance with which the age has shaped its life. In either event, the idea will be a startling portent and a disturbing force. It will divide men, and the line of division will run between those who have been trained in, and adjusted their lives to, the old view of things, and those who have submitted to no such training and adjustment. In other words, the line of division will, in all likelihood, run between the fathers and the children, the manhood and the youth of the times. No two generations have the same point of view or the same line of horizon. Each generation has vantage-points and vantage-powers; but they are not the same. As the world goes, in every period there are two classes which the prophet, be he false or true, must take into account in estimating the relation of his idea to the period.

The one comprises those who stand in the front of life, or have retired with wounds or trophies to the tents in the rear of the battle; men who have won hardness and dis-

cipline in the struggle, who pride themselves on their maturity of judgment and breadth of experience, and who have set the whole system of their thought and the whole framework of their life to the established and consecrated opinions of their generation.

The other is made up of those who are pressing to the front, whose forces are as yet untried and untrained, whose spurs are unwon, who are hunting for new weapons for the conquest of the world, who gaze with a free eye over the breezy common of life, and who have a vague suspicion that because a truth is old it is therefore obsolete.

Those who are in such diverse relations to the world's life must needs apply divergent measurements to the world's thought. Hence it happens that every epoch, in which a new drift cuts into the stream of that thought, is apt to bring misunderstanding between the two generations which comprise the life of the period. The fathers look anxiously on the children who espouse the new; and the children ignore the fathers who cling to the old.

What is true of every transitional epoch was

emphatically true of the epoch of John the Baptist. But of him it was written: "He shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."

This antagonism between the fathers and the children, so commonly evoked by the shifting currents of thought and life, is a cursed thing; and it results from two errors: first, the tendency in each generation to partial and one-sided truth; and second, the false and exaggerated emphasis which men invariably put upon new truth, whereby it seems to contradict old truth. All truth is eternal. It is never young, and it is never old. It is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. Its unveilings and applications and fruitages grow with the ages; but what seems to be new truth is always the old truth with new disclosures and adaptations.

It was so with the truth of which John the Baptist was the herald. It was not a partial truth which divides men, but a comprehensive truth which reconciles men. It was new truth, but it was rooted in old truth. Christ said of

Himself that He came to fulfil the law and the prophets. The New Testament is simply the expansion of the Old. As we look back across the centuries, we can see that Sinai, and the Mount of Beatitudes, of the Transfiguration, of the Crucifixion, of the Ascension, all lie in the same range of mountains. They are all summits in the same high table-lands, where God has touched this earth, and men have caught visions of His righteousness and love. God never denies His revelations, but through the ages He amplifies and enriches them. In Christ, the aged Simeon in the Temple found the fulfilment of the ancient prophets' dreams; and the young St. John, leaping from his fishing-boat, found the vision of a new heaven and a new earth. The fathers, who revered the old, and the children, who sought the new, found in the Christ whom John heralded, their reconciliation.

In all this, I believe, we may find suggestion and lesson in the conflicts of opinion which mark the age in which we live. I copy this passage from the autobiography of Sonya Kovalevsky, the exquisite narrative of the

childhood years of a Russian woman of genius and of sorrow. "It may be said that in the period of time included between the years of 1860 and 1870, all the educated classes of Russia were occupied exclusively with one question, — the family discord between the old and young. Ask about whatever noble family you would at that time, you always heard one and the same thing, — the parents had quarrelled with the children. And the quarrels had not arisen from any substantial, material causes, but simply upon questions of a purely theoretical, abstract character. 'They could not agree about their convictions.' "

The Russians are a queer people, who have recently cracked the egg of barbarism, and with robust, naïve, virgin forces are experimenting with civilization. In the older stocks of Europe and America there are no such violent eruptions of thought and fierce antagonisms between young and old. But with all of us, the world moves and is swinging us into new cycles of thought. New sciences, new interpretations, new fashions of art and literature and organization of life are perplexing and dis-

turbing the current world which flows about us, and of which we are a part. Amid the claim of the old and the allurements of the new, the opinions of the fathers and the children are caught in different drifts. If we think a moment we shall recognize that in this regard the age is not peculiar; but to many of us it seems peculiar and of evil omen. It is an evil thing that the children should challenge and deny the convictions of the fathers, and that the fathers should distrust and scorn the convictions of the children. It argues that the fathers are sitting stolidly, and the children are groping wildly, in a circle of half-truths.

What we all need is an open eye, and a sound judgment, and a reverence for the fact, and a loyalty to that which is highest in motive and life, and a mutual sympathy and trust. With all our preferences, and even our prejudices, we should have such a comprehensive view of truth and life, that we can discern what is divine and permanent, and what is human and transient, in both the old and the new. Let us remember that all truth is one, and all goodness one, the world over and

through the ages; that the old truth, which does not respond to the march of events and the deepening needs of life, and the new truth which breaks with the old truth, and is not an interpretation and expansion of it, are both alike a delusion and a cheat. Let us also learn to discriminate between the prophets, between the breakers of idols and the desecrators of shrines. Above all, let us keep in mind that Christ, His truth, His law, His Church, is large enough to lead the changing fronts of the world's thought, and feed the sharpened hunger of the world's life. Larger visions of Him, warmer loyalties to Him will reconcile the old and the new, and, to-day and through the progressions of the future, "turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers."

V.

The Joylessness of Modern Life.

V.

THE JOYLESSNESS OF MODERN LIFE.

Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice.

PHIL. iv. 4.

AGAINST this exhortation of St. Paul, which breaks upon us like the song of a lark, soaring and singing in the dawn of the new faith and hope that Christ brought to the world, let me quote a passage from the journal of Amiel, — those fascinating confessions of a high-keyed, exquisite soul who lost himself in the tangled forest of modern doubt, and whose keenest sense of life was the riddle of it: “The happy man, as this century is able to produce him, is one who keeps a brave face before the world, and distracts himself the best he can from dwelling upon the thought which is hidden in his heart, — a thought which has in it the sadness of death, — the thought of the

irreparable. The outward peace of such a man is but despair well masked; his gayety is the carelessness of a heart which has lost all its illusions, and has learned to acquiesce in an indefinite putting off of happiness. His wisdom is really acclimatization to sacrifice; his gentleness should be taken to mean privation patiently borne rather than resignation. In a word, he submits to an existence in which he feels no joy, and he cannot hide from himself that all the alleviations with which it is strewn cannot satisfy the soul. The thirst for the Infinite is never appeased. God is wanting."

God help us, if this is the photograph of a happy man, according to this nineteenth century.

The fact of the matter is that Amiel was born with a distaste for life. The complexity of it bewildered him. The onrush of it overbore him. The vital force in his nature, instead of leaping up in a strong, persistent jet, flinging its many-colored spray against the sun, lay like a forest-pool, on whose surface the images of the stars by turns gleamed and were lost amid the waving shadows of the over-

hanging foliage. He knew how to think, and to put his thoughts in deep-voiced words of sombre music; but he never learned, and he was tortured with the suspicion that there was something in him which made it impossible for him to learn, how to live. A soul profoundly serious, and delicately sensitive to righteousness and beauty, his whole life was spent in a futile effort to explain life. He subjected it to the analysis of his metaphysics, and the only thing that was left of it was a dream, a dream wonderful and mystical, with the whispers of conscience and the voices of duty ringing through it, but still a dream, flitting across the abyss of those other and vaster dreams,—the universe and God.

The picture of a man who sits with his finger on his pulse, watching the history of his disease, and describing its symptoms, is not an enlivening spectacle. But Amiel has touched, as few men have touched, the heart of the generation with the pathetic story of his inner life; and his deep insight and luminous words are of use to us; for the disease from which he suffered is, in some sort, the malady of the age.

The most characteristic symptom of the malady that affects the life, the thought, the art, the religion of the day, is want of joyousness. With all our improvements in the appliances of life, we miss the joy of it. As far as I can see, men have not fallen backward, they have made, and are making, day by day, perceptible advances, along the line of the social moralities. Many of the moral ideas of what some are fond of calling the ages of faith, of the mediæval centuries, yea, of a century ago, seem to us a very crude translation of the ethics of Christ. Unquestionably we have lost something in simplicity of life, it may be, in sturdy and heroic quality of character, but we have gained a larger conception of love and purity and temperance, of what Christ meant by saving the soul and the brotherhood of man and the kingdom of God on this earth. Our science is continually dragging unsuspected forces of nature from their lairs, and taming them to our use and convenience. If there be joy in knowledge, in power, in the service of material forces, in the comforts of life, in change of place and exchange of thought, the

world has prodigiously increased its furniture of joy. Beyond question, too, the world of to-day places a high count on happiness. Never did men seek it so keenly, with such persistency of purpose, with such organization of methods, with such ingenious instruments.

And yet the chief characteristic of our modern life is its lack of joy. You see it in the literature of the day, in the pictures, the music, the poems, the novels, that express the artistic temper of the times. You see it in the faces of men and women on the streets. They are anxious, eager. They are hunting for something. What is it? Money, livelihood, luxury, influence, power? What do these mean? Surely, in some sort, and in the last result, happiness. Evidently the game has escaped them. And then there are those who tell us that the game is not worth the candle. They give it up. These are the pessimists and cynics of life, who go through the world vociferously shouting, or, more generally, sit in their cushioned corner, sadly murmuring the question of the scoffer in the Psalm, "Who will show us any good?"

What is the cause of this joylessness that has fallen on our modern life? When we have found its cause, we have got a long way in the finding of its cure. Let me ask another question. What is the difference between St. Paul, ringing out his bugle-note, "Rejoice in the Lord!" and the metaphysical, introspective Frenchman, chanting his threnody of doubt and despair? Amiel, with his acute and exhaustive self-study, discerned the point of difference, and he tells us the name of the malady that was eating the joy out of his life. "The thirst for the Infinite," he says, "is never appeased. God is wanting." He was a child of his generation, and he put his finger on the hidden spring of the joylessness in life of to-day. "God is wanting." This is the secret of the discontent, the unrest, the sadness of the age. This is the reason why men of the world spend their lives building a cage for joy, making it strong, loading it with decoration, but with all their wooing can never get the bird to come into the cage. This is the reason why men in the Church, for the most part, have set their Christianity to the minor

key, and give in their lives only here and there faint echoes of its notes of joy.

Let us bring this matter home to us. You believe in God, you say. You believe that Christ came to show you God's love, and teach you His truth, and bring you into conformity to His law and likeness. Well, a man may believe all this, or say he believes it, and yet God, in any deep and real sense, may be utterly wanting to his life. The apostles of Christ's religion believed this, and what was the result of it? You know the history, the circumstance and setting of their lives. They went forth to proclaim this faith to the world. It was a world something like that of to-day in its secular grandeur and pride of life and thirst for pleasure and want of joy. They were outcasts from all the comfort and happiness and honor that the world had to give. They were scorned and hunted to death. And yet what do you find in the writings that they have left us? A strange thing, joy in life; joy in toil and suffering and ignominy. All around them was the unrest of doubt and the fever of vice and despair of goodness. You get appalling

glimpses of the deep-rooted misery in men's hearts in the pagan literature of the period. The apostles were plunged into the turbid tide. Yet what restfulness of faith, what hope and energy and courage and enthusiasm and sense of spiritual masterhood breathe through their words! "Your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you," Christ had said. The Master fulfilled His promise. You see the proof of it on those pages on which St. Paul flung his glowing heart.

And this same promise holds to-day. The religion of Christ has suffered no change. It holds for men now the same forces which, in apostolic days, poured an unknown strength and peace into human hearts, and lifted human lives into an unearthly sunshine. Now, as then, it is a message to be believed, but, above all, it is a life to be lived. And if it be a life, it is a joy. Christ's promise of joy is uncanceled. It is rooted in the nature of things. All life, if it rise into the realm of self-consciousness, means joy. Otherwise God, being good, would not pour out such torrents of life. The mere outflow

and onflow of life, if it be healthful and unimpeded, bring happiness to all conscious, living creatures. And the soul, which has such hunger for joy, which has such capacities for the most exquisite phases of joy, finds only in the life of God its rest and fulfilment. God, with the faiths and loves and hopes that He has given us in Christ, feeds the hunger of the soul, just as God, with the air and the sunshine, feeds the hunger of the flower. The satisfaction of hunger is joy.

Yes; the life of the world is joyless, because it thrusts God from its thought. If our life be joyless, it is because we talk of God, but fail to throw open the door of our heart so that the life of God may come in and possess us. If we believed, as St. Paul believed, in God and the love of God revealed in Christ, our lives would overflow with the joy of Christ. "What!" you say, "can I have joy, with all this misery of the world flowing about me and beating in upon me, with all the horrible possibilities of pain and disaster lying in wait along the pathway of my life? Can I have joy in my toil, in the

cares and worries of the world and the household, in my struggle with temptation, when I fall into sin, when sickness comes and enfeeblement of power, when the shadows lengthen in the afternoon of life and the light fades into twilight? Can I sing glad songs when I sit in the night with my heart full of tears and the memories of vanished faces?" Yes; God is in your toil and your temptation and in the darkest midnight of your sorrow. No accident of your life need obscure or interrupt His life in your soul.

You know how a living spring gushes up from the earth. It does not depend on showers or the inflowing of rivulets. It is not fed from the surface. It has its sources deep down in the bosom of the rock. The joy of God, if His life be in your heart, is such a living spring. It rises from depths that nothing can exhaust. It deepens with its outflowing. It will not ebb away when you need it most. You can drink of it in the heat of the battle and in the weary marches of the day and when you stand a lone sentinel in the storm and darkness of the night.

“Rejoice in the Lord,” says St. Paul. He repeats the word “rejoice” as if this were the emphatic word. The life and religion of to-day need to ponder this reiterated command of the Christian apostle. Christ came to bring God’s joy to men. Joy forevermore belongs to the sisterhood of the Christian graces.

VI.

Sinai.

VI.

SINAI.

I will walk at liberty: for I seek Thy commandments.

Ps. cxix. 45.

THIS sentence from the old Hebrew song creates at once a philosophy, a morality and a religion, by which a man may take up his life and read its meaning and discern its law, and make it a ladder on which he may climb to the full height of his nature.

A word like this is good for all time. We of to-day have especial need to get at the truth it holds, and measure its bearings on the questions of the hour and the conduct of our lives.

We live in an age which is stung with a passion for liberty. On every side, men are pushing against closed doors and undermining the foundations of ancient walls. So much has been done in slipping back the bolts of

old dungeons of thought, in striking off the fetters against which fierce blood has long been throbbing, in opening to mankind new thoroughfares of knowledge and power, that we need not wonder that men are restive under lingering despotisms, and have their imaginations haunted by wild dreams of impossible liberties. In our struggle from the old world which has lived its life to the new world which is yet to be born, in our passion for emancipations and the demolition of ancient Bastiles, it is not surprising that men sometimes mistake shrines for prisons, and hurl their lances against laws which are necessary for the world's social order, and against structures which were built for the shelter of the world's precious things. All this, however, only proves that this generation, above all others, needs a definition of liberty which shall wisely direct its line of march and indicate its points of attack.

And what is true of the world in general is true of the most important fragment of the world, — the young life that it holds, the inheritors of the future whose bones and

features are forming in the womb of the present.

The cry of youth is the cry for liberty. A boy, especially if he be vigorous and imaginative, is apt to take up life, not from the threshold of his father's house, where he finds his foothold, but from the line of the distant horizon, where his dreams melt into the sky. He is fevered with his untried, untrained force, and has an illusion that somehow or other he can remake the world in which he lives. Consequently, he steps out, full of challenge to the opinions and methods on which the world has organized its life. Its routine of law and usage irks him, represses his individuality, binds like a fetter his impetuous desire. He does not see the need or the sanction or the advantage of it. So he flings himself against it with a cry of protest or, with no cry at all, crawls underneath it. He is making a break for liberty, he thinks. He will refashion the world in the interests of freedom. He will make a new world, in which the old orthodoxies of thought and conventionalities of life are hung up as curiosities, — a world emancipated,

in which he can assert himself and do as he pleases.

Plainly, this is an age which needs a definition of liberty that will teach the progressive young man, and his sister, the progressive young woman, to take up the flagon of life by the handle, not by the brim, so that they shall be nourished and invigorated, instead of being drenched and stained by the wine in the flagon.

We can do no better than go back to that old word of David: "I will walk at liberty: for I seek Thy commandments." He was a warrior-king of a barbaric age and crude morals, but the eternal Spirit of truth breathed through his anointed lips; and this verse from his sacred lyric finds an echo in that deep word of Christ: "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

"What!" you ask, "must I hunt for commandments in order to find liberty? What is liberty but release from commandments?" It is the ignorance and sophistry which underlie these questions that make the cries for liberty in these days so confused, incoherent and perilous.

Liberty, all along its history and in all its phases, by whomsoever sought, whether in great social movements or in the personal life, is found only by finding God's commandments.

What do we mean by God's commandments? Not simply the laws of Christ; although surely they are included, and they transcend all other edicts when we consider liberty in its relations to the moral and spiritual life. But dismissing for the moment these higher phases of liberty, we must recognize as God's commandments the facts and laws which He has put in His universe and in human nature, and which constitute the permanent forces and conditions of our lives.

Liberty, whether for society or the individual, is won, not by ignoring these facts or breaking these laws, but by searching them out, getting their exact bearings, measuring their exact force, ordering the life with reference to their presence and pressure.

The law of gravitation, for instance, is one of God's commandments. It is the divine needle ceaselessly darting through nature and knitting together the physical universe. The

more perfectly you recognize the law of gravitation and measure it and obey it, the more completely you are master of it. If you ignore it, it will fling the life out of you over the edge of a precipice. If you observe it, train it and harness it, it will turn your wheels and lift your burdens and enable you to drive your coach above the clouds. The history of science is the story of man's adventure in seeking the commandments of God. The textbooks in our schools are simply the records of divine voices in nature; and of many of the voices we have not yet caught the accents or made the registry. If you want the freedom of the universe, liberty in regard to any law of nature, three steps will give you that liberty: knowledge of the law, obedience to the law, conquest of the law. The third step is possible only through the two preceding steps.

Liberty is obedient, joyous movement within the circle of law. As long as we keep within the circle, so long, and no longer, we are master of the law. If we overstep the circle but by an inch, we become the slave of the law. "I will walk at liberty: for I seek Thy com-

mandments." That word of David has a long reach. Let us take it on a higher range.

Man fulfils God's plan of a man only as he grows up and bears his part in social relations. The savage is but the rudiments, and the recluse is but the ruins of a man. The world of humankind, into which we are put for the training of our powers, is an organism, just as the universe is an organism. There are permanent, persistent forces in our nature which are just as ineradicable, as changeless, as inevitable in their thrust and pull as the force of gravitation. Those forces run along the elemental lines of structure on which God has fashioned our nature. Of course, the higher forces must subordinate the lower forces. Otherwise the man descends to the brute and fails to fulfil himself. But, taken in their due order and law of ascendancy, these complex forces in our nature are, in a certain sort, the commandments of God, which a man can no more transcend than he can slip from the clutch of the law of gravitation; and the reading aright of these commandments, and the observance of them in their proper proportion

and highest range, constitute the science, the progress, the freedom of life.

Humanity has been moving before the thrust of these forces through all its recorded history. It has built up its civilizations by the action and interplay of these forces. They have determined the functions of government, the distribution of labor, the specialization in each sex of its domain of power and responsibility and duty, which are fixed and permanent features in the organization of society. These forces lie at the root of human nature, and human nature bears its flower only as it is fed by its root. You can tie a flower to a dead stick, but the flower will only last a day; and no theories of philosophers or enactments of legislatures will give the stick power to produce flowers each season. This is the error of many good people who are trying to reform the world by a set of resolutions and teach it to ride to the millennium on their hobby-horse. The hobby-horse rocks and makes a noise, but it does not go. All along the history of the world's advance, we see the relics of aborted ideals and

uninhabited Utopias, and machines for perpetual motion which run down in a week.

Every man is called to bear his part in the long-drawn fight between sin and righteousness. He must buckle on armor and strike vigorous blows for the rescue and enlargement of human life. The world is freer, holier, happier to-day than in the grandest yesterday that was ever made memorable by heroic struggle and achievement. But there are still calls to instant battle and organized siege against intrenched wrong. There are still on this earth dragons of the primeval slime tearing and befouling humankind. As in the earlier ages there were exceptional prophetic types of goodness and heroism which have now become the common stock, so there is a persistence of the old brutal types in the human life of to-day. Envy, cruelty, and lust have not yet died out of our nature. For the most part, in our Christian civilization, they live behind masks; but they live, and they must be fought wherever they lurk in our domestic, industrial, or political life.

But we must fight wisely. In the conduct

of the fight we must be careful lest we confuse ancient wrongs and abuses, transient details and fashions and conventionalities, with primordial, divine facts, and the elemental lines of the social structure. To try to reform the world, taking no account of these facts and lines, is like trying to jump outside our shadow or declaiming against the equator. To uplift human life and hold it firm on high levels of energy, we must make alliance with the laws of nature. "I will walk at liberty: for I seek Thy commandments."

But a question confronts us. Are there not practical dangers in the application of this truth? Shall we not imperil the ethical progress of the world and the ethical life of the individual by alliances with nature? There is a warning note in the verse of Tennyson:—

" Hold thou the truth, define it well,
For fear divine philosophy
Should push beyond her mark, and be
Procuress to the lords of Hell."

No! nature rightly interpreted is on the side of morality. Morality, in the last analysis, consists in obedience to the laws of our being;

not merely the laws that concern our physical welfare, but the laws that conserve the force and fruition of our highest manhood. All through our nature, in soul as well as body, morality is obedience to law. Even the study of physics is a study in morals, the morals that grow out of the fundamental structures and processes of life. The physicist tells us that the universe, so far from being the plaything of chance, is thriddled through and through with laws which are exact and unerring and pitiless; that nature, so far from being immoral, is a veritable mount Sinai, from which the eternal moralities are proclaimed, and of which it is written: "The mount burned with fire." He tells us that the ethical laws of life are something more than conventional and arbitrary inventions, transcribed from sacred books, enacted by human legislatures, enforced by policemen and public opinion. They are born amid the elemental forces. They spring from the nature of things. They serve nature; and the forces that play along the lines of nature are their avengers.

The culprit may overlook and forget them;

but they do not overlook or forget him. They follow his track. They hunt him down. They break in upon his philosophy, his defiance, and his prayer. They stretch across his path their unseen arms. They smite him with their forgotten hands. They issue from the mount that "burns with fire." Even the science of nature utters its confirmation of the ethical interpretation of life.

We have thought and lived to little purpose, if we do not recognize that life is braced and interlaced with laws, laws upon the observance of which hangs our happiness, our physical vigor, our intellectual force, the respect of our fellows, the high places and prizes of the world, our sense of moral dignity and worth.

As for those who say: "What care I for laws? I want a free life! Liberty for my pleasure, my ease, my caprice," and, with this cry, dash their head against the laws that stand like steel bars in the cage of their life,—well, it is not the laws that bleed and shrink with pain and crawl into a corner with bandages and remorse.

Liberty is to know the law and to fashion

the life with reference to the law; the highest law, the law by which our soul grows and is regnant and sets life to its highest key of power and joy.

The Psalmist has given the road-song through this world, hung and balanced with laws: "I will walk at liberty: for I seek Thy commandments."

VII.

God's Word to the World.

VII.

GOD'S WORD TO THE WORLD.

And the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.

ST. JOHN i. 14.

GOD is a name into which the world, in the expansion of its knowledge and the refinements of its thought, is pouring a deeper richness and mystery of meaning. In the childhood of religion and to children of every generation, God is little more than the magnified image of a supremely good and powerful man flung on the remote screen of the heavens. While we are on this earth, He must always exist for us in colors and outlines which we take from our human nature. This is inevitable from the limitations in which we do our thinking. We can of course conceive of a higher and more splendid type of being than our own, but we cannot present it to our imagination in any other way than by painting

an exaggerated copy of ourselves. If we try to picture the inhabitants of the planet Mars, we can do no more than imagine some modification of a man. Christian art has always represented the angels in human form. So with our conceptions of God. Even when we wisely and reverently abstain from picturing Him to our imagination, we cannot think of Him except as we invest Him with the highest and grandest attributes of our human nature. This is what we mean by that somewhat pedantic and yet necessary phrase, which the philosophers of the day are hurling against the Bible and Christian literature, both of the past and the present, — the phrase, “anthropomorphic conceptions of God.” Of course we speak of God in human terms. Unfortunately we have no other, and we are driven by the poverty of our thought. We are, moreover, justified in this. The first page of the Bible bears witness to the significant fact that man was created in the image of God; and if man bears God’s image, God also bears man’s image.

Still it is very childish and, indeed, irreverent to speak or even think of God in the

fashion which obtains among many good people, and for which they plead the example of passages in the Old Testament. The early revelations of God were professedly rudimentary and immature. They were necessarily adapted to the moral and intellectual culture of the times in which they were given. It is strange how Christians of to-day will persistently turn their backs on Christ, and go hunting for their religion among the patriarchs and prophets of the Mosaic dispensation. Why should we descend from the lofty summits of outlook to which Christ has led the religious instinct and conscience of Christendom? Those summits are the Himalayas of the world's spiritual life. Whatever the advance of secular thought, we must climb those divine peaks of vision for our completest measurement of man and our final conception of God.

But since the time of Christ, men have trained their eyes to the new splendor and the new loveliness in which He enthroned God. They have been slowly spelling out the meaning of that word which He gave the world: "Our Father which art in Heaven."

Our modern science, with the trophies it has won from its explorations in nature, has contributed its interpretation to that word. It can speak, it is true, only of a supreme, eternal force, flinging out the surging torrent of life; but what vastness and grandeur it has added to our idea of God! He is immanent in all things, and yet He transcends all things. In our highest reaches of thought, He is incomprehensible and ineffable.

We find in the hymn of Frederick William Faber a simple and profound expression of the Christian conception of God:—

“ My God, how wonderful Thou art,
Thy majesty how bright,
How beautiful Thy mercy-seat
In depths of burning light!

“ How dread are Thy eternal years,
O everlasting Lord;
By prostrate spirits day and night
Incessantly adored!

“ How wonderful, how beautiful,
The sight of Thee must be,
Thine endless wisdom, boundless power,
And awful purity!

“ Oh, how I fear Thee, living God,
With deepest, tenderest fears,
And worship Thee with trembling hope,
And penitential tears !

“ Yet I may love Thee too, O Lord,
Almighty as Thou art,
For Thou hast stooped to ask of me
The love of my poor heart.”

I think you will agree with me that these devout verses are a refreshment and exaltation amid the theological pedantries and rhythmical intimacies, which form a large percentage of our popular hymnody.

This mysterious, beautiful and omnipotent God became a human child and grew up to manhood on this earth and walked among men and was crucified on a Roman cross. Strange it is; difficult to believe. Many a man to-day denies it; and many a man who professes to believe it does so, only because he fails to realize the stupendous fact which he professes to believe. Let us try to get at the meaning and bearing of this fact, which is the corner-stone of Christ's religion. We read in that profound poem to the Gospel of

St. John: "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. And the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us."

What is the office of a word? It articulates something. It reveals something. It expresses the thought or emotion or purpose of him who utters the word. God's word reveals God. He, being what He is, so rich in power and love, must utter Himself in a word. We being what we are, so full of need and desire within the low roof and narrow walls of this earth, He must speak to us. He must tell us of Himself. He must tell us of our unseen relationships and destiny. He must utter a word that we will understand.

Well, the thing nearest to us is ourselves; the flesh we wear, the soul within us, the life we live. If we understand anything, we understand this. This, then, is the word that God uttered; the word that was crammed with the utmost wealth of meaning; the word that strikes our thought and conscience and heart with the subtlest interpretation. "The word was made flesh, and dwelt among

us." After all, is it not reasonable? Is it not immeasurably more reasonable than a dumb, sightless, pitiless God, an Omnipotent Immorality throned on the height of the universe, mutely suffering His orphaned children to stretch groping hands into the darkness?

But we have not yet read the full meaning of the phrase, "The word was made flesh, and dwelt among us."

If there is anything that represents the common stuff of our humanity, it is that word "flesh." It is the earthly yarn from which our bodies are spun; these bodies which have such kinship to the brutes, which are the seat of our instincts and appetites and diseases; these bodies which are woven of dust and crumble into dust. We recognize the grandeur of the soul; but the flesh, — why should God be made that? And this life of ours, what a struggle it is! What drudgeries it involves! What perils lurk in it! What possibilities of pain and shame! How it cripples us and stains us and disfigures us! Why should God come into that?

The secret of it is that God loved us and wanted to teach us to love Him. So when He purposed to reveal Himself to us, He did not merely descend from His throne and stand in His royal robe and diadem in the vestibule of His palace. He not only came into the hovel of His poorest, dreariest child, He became Himself that child; He wore his soul and body; He looked out of his eyes; He felt his cares and pains; He lived his life. Thus God spake His word, proved His love, evoked the love of men.

But this was not all He did in taking our flesh and life. He taught us that there is something in that flesh and life of which otherwise we never could have dreamed. In taking it, He showed us the divineness that is in it. It was like lighting a flame inside of a lantern. He illuminated our human nature so that we could see the divine image in which it was fashioned. In all the mortal years of the Child of Bethlehem, how grandly and sweetly shone out the divine image. But He called Himself the Son of Man. He named us His brothers. Christ, when He walked this earth,

gave us the right to claim, and His spirit, which He breathes through His Church, is teaching us the way to realize, the divineness in the nature we wear and the life we live.

This is theology, you say. No, it is life, life in its reality, life in its roots, life in its true flower and fruitage, life with God in it.

Certain exponents of our art and literature are depicting life, they tell us. They affect the name of Realists. They are the product of a reaction from the inflated sentimentalism which enfeebled and falsified the art and literature of the last generation. No great artistic product was ever fashioned except upon lines of realism edged with the flame of the ideal. But all reactions tend to exaggeration. Thus the so-called realists of the day, for the most part, are yielding to the temptation to paint life only in its most morbid and exceptional types. The defect will rectify itself, for it is getting tiresome; and no school of art can long survive the weariness of the public. Men are weary of realistic art, just as before they were weary of sentimental art, simply because they feel that both the one and the other are false

pictures of life. Any canvas or page, colored merely with pigments dug from the degradations into which life sometimes plunges, is essentially false. It is too crude, uncomplex and unrelieved to be an adequate representation of actual life in an actual environment. What we want in our art and literature is life, — the real life of men and women, discerned, interpreted and unified by imaginative insight and the artistic, plastic touch. Even the most familiar and disfigured things are thus lifted into regions of exhaustless pathos and beauty.

What art does to typical forms, and in a sort of fiction, the religion of Christ does to common humanity and in reality. It is not a religion of the clouds. It deals with the facts of life. It is realistic. "The word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." That is its central word, its theology, its ethic, its history. It shows us God, not in the remote heavens, but crossing the thresholds of earth. It takes man with the flesh on him, with the life of the world surging about him, in the midst of his toil to get bread and his care for his children and his temptations to sin; and, amid all these,

it gives him the vision and the touch of God. It reaches down to the common, elemental things of life, to the life at the fireside, in the fields and on the street. Its first scene on earth — the scene which is pictured in the imagination and worship of Christendom — was the stable of an inn in a Syrian village, where a young mother is sitting by the manger in which her Babe is sleeping. And when that Child grew to manhood, He mingled with fishermen on the lake-shore and artisans on the street and tax-gatherers and Rabbis at their dinner-tables. Everywhere He touched life, felt its struggle, read its secret ciphers and crowned it with transcendent idealities. His religion, despite the distortions which it has suffered, has made its idealities facts in the lives of men.

The beautiful Christ has come into our life. With all the ancient wrongs that are still working hurt and shame to it, we to-day must read it and live it with the interpretation which He has given it.

VIII.

The Peace of Christ.

VIII.

THE PEACE OF CHRIST.

*Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you :
not as the world giveth, give I unto you.*

ST. JOHN xiv. 27.

WE cannot receive or even understand this bequest of Christ, except we recognize two facts: one touching the Giver, the other touching the gift.

“My peace I give unto you,” Christ said. That great word “peace” He claimed and made His own. Of all the types of peace possible to man He singled out one and called it “My peace.”

There are certain books which are crowned and canonized as the immortals of literature; which retain their freshness and power through all the vibrations of the world's thought; on whose pages men of all centuries and all climes find echoes to the deepest voices of

their heart. Chief among these, is that book which has come down to us from the fourth century of the Christian era, "The Confessions of St. Augustine." It contains the disclosures of one of the largest and richest souls that the Church of Christ ever nurtured. The book is full of sentences that strike great shafts of thought into the abyss of God and the abyss of the soul. This is one of them. It is familiar to many of you. "Thou hast made us for Thyself; and our heart is restless, till it rest in Thee." St. Augustine is speaking of God. He uses language which can be addressed only to God. It does not take a saint, it takes only a man who has lived deeply and has a sense of the illimitable need and environment of his nature, to see the truth of these words of the great African bishop. Man, being what he is, can find peace only in God. All the great masters and revealers of the human heart, outside as well as inside of Christianity, have recognized this fact. None ever pointed it out to men so lucidly and so persistently as Christ. Yet the night before He died, as He bade farewell

to His disciples, He said: "My peace I give unto you." What is the implication? What tremendous claim lies behind these words? Christ took from the heart of God His divine attribute, His exclusive gift, and said: "My peace I give unto you."

We have found the name of the Giver. It is that Name, which we pronounce upon our knees with a hush in our heart, the incommunicable Name, which all the distinctive features in the life of Christ implied, which He explicitly claimed, and which the world has granted Him with all the attestations of its grandest faith and worship.

But the divine peace which Christ gave, what is that?

He said: "Not as the world giveth, give I unto you." When we take the word "peace" from the lips of Christ, we must beware lest we import into it the degradation and confusion that the word has suffered in the handling of men. The Roman historian Tacitus, speaking of the military scourges and ravagers of his period, uses the phrase: "They make a desert and call it peace." This pictures quite accu-

rately the sort of peace that the world gives to those who take life and live it according to the world's measurements. When it says peace, it means something akin to exhaustion. We need not blame the world. It speaks its own dialect. It conducts the game of life and prescribes the rules of the game from its own point of view. The two fundamental rules are, we are told, "struggle for existence," and "survival of the fittest." Men have only recently invented these phrases, and stamped them as scientific coin. But all along, it is maintained, the things designated by the words have been the forces that have prodded human-kind to this nineteenth-century point in its historic march.

With its adjustment of life on the basis of war, what does the world know of, or care for peace? It is the word that it writes on its certificates of discharge for its crippled and exhausted fighters.

"Not as the world giveth, give I unto you," said Christ. The peace which He gave does not mean rest, exemption from struggle, life drugged and plastered on a hospital-bed, life

dozing in the world's infirmaries. It means the free, large, glad outgoing of power; life set in its true relationships, adjusted to its real issues, keyed to its highest point of energy, fulfilling its largest fruition. His is the peace, not of a flower broken from its stem and rotting on the ground, but of a flower joyously drawing up the life of its root into the sunshine and transmuting it into exquisite form and color and perfume.

God loves life, else why should He create it with such richness of invention, and pour it out of His bosom in such measureless torrents. So He who came forth from God proved by His every word and act that He loved life. He came, as He Himself said, to save life. He saves it, not by mutilating it, but by lifting it into a range of forces, where it finds emancipation, enlargement, beauty, vigor, immortality. All this He gathered into that word "peace," which, with its new depth and height of meaning, He gave to the world, when He was about to step out into the fierce agony where He closed with, and conquered the malignant forces that wrought the unrest of the world.

But how does this peace of Christ come to us to-day? We can see that it has been like a bit of leaven in the meal of the world's history. It has worked. It has made its presence felt in the meal. But how imperfectly! how slowly! The actual bread of life, which the mass of men have baked in their ovens, has been soggy diet, which they have prized, toiled and fought for, simply because they could get no better. Well, the figure of the leaven is Christ's own simile. He did not say that the leaven would work swiftly. He simply said that it would work till all the meal was leavened. As He led out His disciples to the mount of the Ascension, He told them: "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father has put in His own power." A leaf fluttering for a summer on a twig has no right to demand of the tree the completed record of its hundred years of growth. All along the centuries, Christ has been fulfilling to men, here and there in broadening areas of life, to men who would receive it at all times and everywhere, His promise of peace. It is so to-day. Those

who give no invitation to the peace of Christ, who shut their doors on it, have no right to challenge His promise. He bequeathed His peace, not to the world, but to His disciples.

But is not the world in which we live His? It bears His name. Ostensibly, it takes from Him its conceptions of God and life and righteousness. Yet it would seem as if the peculiar mark of the world to-day was its unrest, its disquiet, its feverish search, its unsatisfied desire. The higher domains of thought ring with battle-cries, the noise of contending armies fighting in the night. There are those who tell us that the struggle of life was never so difficult, so grinding, so arrogant, so remorseless, so lavish to those who are on top, so pitiless to those who are under, as now. It seems as if the antagonism of men had been intensified, and had had new fangs set in its jaws. This, I think, is a mistake. Each age is apt to imagine that its own little skirmish in the long-drawn world-fight is the fiercest battle in the annals of time. We have inherited the results of ancient victories. The results are intrenched and fixed

in our organized life, our habit of thought and conscience. A thousand old brutalities and crimes are remembered, only as we read their names on the sepulchres of history. But the fact remains: the age is feverish and disquieted, a prey to vague anxieties, ignorant of the whitherward of its drifts. Certain it is that the world has not yet inherited the peace that Christ promised. But His promise holds good. Christ gives His peace now as ever. How? Let us see.

First, in our intellectual struggle and unrest. It is an age of doubt, we say. The air is filled with voices of distrust and challenge and denial. All this is disquieting. We cannot get up in the morning and take our theologies as complacently and as inevitably as we take our ancestors and the law of gravitation. We ask questions. We compare our inherited notions and the popular versions of Christ's religion with the documents of Holy Scripture, the interpretations of past ages, the religions of the world, the science of the day. This, of course, implies movement, revision, readjustment; but it does not necessarily imply

error or loss of faith or denial of truth or vagabondage of spiritual life. At all events, whatever the movements of wind and current in the theological world of the day, there is one figure that stands changeless and unchangeable, — Christ. He alone can give what the intellectual life of the age craves, — faith.

To say that He is the highest embodiment of the religious thought of the race is a statement which utterly fails to describe Him or account for Him. For the men of to-day to have a religion, they must have something more than this. Religion must have fixed points of certainty, centres of rest, facts on which you can lean as you lean on the laws of nature. It is rooted in facts which require authentication beyond the reach of the most subtile instruments of our science. Behind it there must be a voice that speaks to us from regions beyond the boundary-lines of our knowledge. Where is there such a voice? There is only one. In this doubting, questioning age, Christ stands with the only cure for its doubts, and the only answer to its questions. To the foolish who are frightened, and the weak who are

bewildered, and the curious who are searching, He makes the same demand,—faith. Being what He is, He has the right to demand our faith. Only as we give Him our faith, can our intellect drop its anchors in those depths of truth which the plummets of science cannot reach.

But, even more than the intellect, the heart craves peace. This age, above all other ages, is proving the truth of that deep word of St. Augustine: *The heart is restless till it rest in God.* If the intellect finds peace in faith, the heart finds peace in love. To rest in God we must love Him. But where shall we find God? What has been the result of our explorations of nature, our enlargement of the horizon of knowledge? Simply this: we have pushed God into the remote abysses of the universe. The old, primeval conceptions of God painted on the walls of the world's nursery have become impossible. Christ told the woman at the well of Samaria that God is a Spirit; and the world, in these later days, not content with the word of Christ, has sublimated God to an attenuation of thought, which leaves nothing

for men to fear or love or worship. How can God, reduced to the "cosmic force," give peace to that fierce, insatiable thing, the human heart?

Christ said: "My peace I give unto you." He said this, not simply because He was God, but because He was God interpreting Himself to men, God touching human life with a man's voice and brain and heart. Never, as now, has the world been able to weigh the value of this fact. God became Christ in order to come within the ranges of our love. He took upon Himself the heart of a man to woo the hearts of men. By the life in Palestine and the death on the cross, He proved to men that the supreme, eternal force in the universe is love. By virtue of this He asks our love and we can give Him our love. With all the persuasions of love, He draws our tumultuous heart within the depths of His fathomless heart, where it finds peace.

It is a peace which implies no repression of faculty, no mutilation of nature, no impairment of manhood, no sleeping draught administered to any energy of brain or heart. It is "Power

leaning on his own right arm;" man fulfilling himself in God. And yet nothing is so necessary for our life in the world. What the age needs, what we all need, is to stand in our place and put our hands to our work with a high, concentrated motive. Only in the persistent thrust of such a motive, will our life find coherency and momentum. Christ alone can give us this motive, and with it, that peace which comes to a life that has found its meaning and fulfils its purpose.

IX.

The Full Stature of a Man.

IX.

THE FULL STATURE OF A MAN.

And He said unto me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee. And the spirit entered into me when He spake unto me, and set me upon my feet, that I heard Him that spake unto me.

EZEKIEL ii. 1, 2.

WHEN God speaks to a man, He commands him to stand upon his feet, and the Spirit of God, when it touches a man, sets him upon his feet. Let us, as far as we can in a swift glance, get the bearings of these facts.

Men oftentimes speak, and more frequently act, as if the religion of Christ paralyzed manhood and cut the sinews of life. They seem to have a vague fear that if they accept the Christian faith, somehow or other an iron fetter will be slipped over their nature, and the

sunshine fade from the sky. This is the reason, I believe, why so many turn a deaf ear, or give a reluctant ear, to the religion of Christ; why, at the best, they approach Him so timorously, hesitate to yield Him their hearts, and refuse to allow Him any large room to work His purpose in their lives.

Now I concede the premise that determines this attitude to Christ; the premise that a man is entitled to the rounded fulfilment and the highest reach of the nature which God has given him. Our nature is a parchment on which God has written His will concerning us. The difficulty is that the original writing of God is so blotted and interlined with the writing of the devil, that men misread their nature, and take it at the devil's interpretation instead of God's interpretation.

It were bad business to minimize and ignore the forces of evil lodged in our being. No metaphysical juggling will explain these forces away. No æsthetical rose-water will heal the wound and shame and misery which these forces are working in our life. Surely God's image in us is obscured by rust and dirt; but

just as surely, His image is beneath the most corrosive rust and the thickest crust of dirt that ever gathered on a soul; and any adequate estimate of our nature must take that image into account. I say, then, that we are entitled to the full development of the nature which we wear, and will wear forever; only we must take it in its deepest meaning, at its highest energy, in its noblest ranges of growth and fruitage. If we take it otherwise, then we mistake it, and it is the most fundamental and ruinous mistake that a man can make.

You recognize this, as you look around in the world, and see men working out their appraisals of life. They work them out, without any formal statement to themselves, it may be, with little deliberation or foresight, half unconscious of their line of movement, seemingly the sport of caprice and circumstance; but, after all, each according to his choice and purpose. A man puts a value on himself, and life takes him at his valuation. It gives him not the full measure but a certain measure of what he asks; and some men are asking simply ease, pleasure, the indulgence of appetite, the

selfish gratification of taste, the possession of power without love or duty in the use of power. You see their mistake. Nature writes it out large on their life. Sometimes her verdict burns in letters of flame. But she speedily buries her blunder and tries to forget it, despite the lying epitaph that men elaborately carve on its tombstone. We can readily see that a man who has put on himself and worked out a value of this sort has laid hold of the meanest threads of his nature, from which to spin the web of his life. The fabric of course is no better than the stuff of which it is woven.

An extreme case illustrates the class from which it is taken. In the measurement of ourself, any value below the highest is a mistake. It defeats God's intention regarding us. It flings us at once on an inferior plane of life. It produces a manhood mutilated at the top, impoverished in its deepest centres of power and joy.

Now let us glance at the religion of Christ. It is to feed these centres of power and joy in our nature, to enlarge them, to quicken

them to their keenest energy, that that religion comes to us with its claim and appeal. So far from paralyzing manhood and cutting the sinews of life, it is something which God has put on this earth to nourish the essential traits of manhood and thrust life upward to its highest levels of force and happiness. If you have any other conception of it, you have read your Christianity from some perversion and mistranslation. It has been nineteen hundred years in the world, and of course men have depraved it, construed fragments of it for the whole of it, thrown its parts out of proportion and twisted it to make it fit into their false science and bad metaphysic. All of us are more or less affected by our inheritance of a crude and one-sided Christianity, manufactured by intense men of one idea, or adjusted to the popular taste for romance and superstition. Of course the distorted faith of one century does not suit, and can render no service to the actual life of a succeeding century.

Christ Himself is the only true measure of His religion. We must take it in its original features and accents, with the large, grand

truths which He revealed as its lines of structure, and the institutions which He founded to shelter those truths and bring them into living touch with men. What did He tell us of His religion? Nay, what did He tell us of Himself? — for Christ is Christianity. He said: “The Son of Man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.” “I have come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.” “I am the Light of the world. He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.”

These are crucial words. They sweep the whole horizon of Christ’s truth and work. When He said life, He meant life, the whole life of a man, including the highest part of him, through all its history here and hereafter. He loved our human nature, and He took it upon Himself in order that we might see the image of God that was in it, flawless and undimmed. He honored life with its common loves and toils; and He came to glorify its firesides and fishing-nets and couches of suffering. He honored the distinctive traits of man and woman; and He

came to reinforce the robust strength of manhood and deepen the tender grace of womanhood. The purpose of His religion is not to impoverish and mutilate life, but to show us the values of life as they stand in the light of God; and, in the downward pull of our nature and the sharp stress of the world, to help us to realize the highest values.

Thus it comes to us. Thus it addresses us. It says, as God said to the prophet: "Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee." You must meet it, as a man meets a friend, standing on your feet, looking into his eyes, grasping his hand. And more than this; as its spirit enters into you, it will set you upon your feet. In other words, it comes to you as a man to make you more of a man. It comes to uplift your nature, enrich your life, to give it reach and vision, to keep you on your feet in your fight with sin. All that it asks is, that you welcome it with the recognition, and give it room for the accomplishment, of its purpose.

But it makes demands, you say. Yes, but all its demands are needful for the training of

our manhood to its highest fruition; and it helps us to meet its demands. Well, what does it demand? Let us take those demands which the world most hotly challenges. For instance, it demands faith. But do you expect to go through life without faith? Then you will miss the best and richest things of life. It is like a man drawing the curtains of his windows when the sunshine is making holiday on the earth. He shuts himself in from the light and song and beauty of the world. Everything that really appeals to, and enters into our higher life must be laid hold of by the outreaching hands of faith. God, above all, would not be God, if we could measure Him and dissect Him with our science. And you must remember that the faith which responds to the claim of Christ may be weak and timid at first; but it grows as it learns more fully the answer of Christ to the need of our nature.

Again, it demands worship. But surely no thoughtful man would give much for a life that had not the element of worship in it. It is when faith in unseen things is

faint, and worship dies out of life, that men ask, "Is life worth living?" An empty heaven overarches an empty heart. If you do not worship God, then, in the dire hunger of your famished soul, you will worship some phantasy or passion which you have put on the altar of God.

Lastly, it demands the curbing of the lower forces of our nature. This, after all, is the demand that excites the most angry and determined revolt. But life itself, outside of Christ, if it be carried to any high issue, makes the same demand. Even to be the shadow of a man, even to be respectable and keep our place in the world, we must chain the brute within us. It is a difficult task, and men who essay it without the aid of God oft-times find that the wild beast has escaped his cage, and is devouring the beauty and dignity of their life. Christ, it is true, goes beyond the demands of the world. He asks us to sacrifice, if the need come, natural appetite and innocent joy in the behoof of our soul. So great is the price of the soul. In every high form of faith, it has fought with the

imperious demands of the flesh; and the history of all that is pure and heroic and divine in the world is the registry of its victories. Life itself finds its meaning only by the soul working out with pain and battle its supremacy.

To accomplish this, the world has its methods; but Christ's method, after all, is the easiest method, the only effective method. Starve the evil in your nature by feeding the good that is in it. Conquer the strong man that has taken possession of your house by bringing in a stronger than he. We can wage a successful battle with sin only by putting ourselves in alliance with God. The Church of Christ, with its revealed truth, its sacraments and its worships, is the divine porch which God has built in the world, through which we may come to Him, and draw into our life, for help in our struggle and the healing of our wounds, the forces of His divine life.

Can you not grant these demands? Christ could not ask less. They are necessary to our well-being as we act our part in the world. They involve no treason to the intellect or the

heart. Christ's chief concern in asking you to range yourself on His side, to accept His faith and His law, is to carry your manhood to the height of its power, to enlarge your life and ennoble its joy. He wants to lift you to the full stature of a man. That is all, but that is everything. It means that you recognize God in your life and, in every issue, hold yourself as the child of God. It means that you take Christ as the ideal of your manhood; that you grow into His likeness, till you "come, in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

X.

The Measuring Reed.

X.

THE MEASURING REED.

In the visions of God brought He me into the land of Israel, and set me upon a very high mountain, by which was as the frame of a city on the south. And He brought me thither, and, behold, there was a man whose appearance was like the appearance of brass, with a line of flax in his hand and a measuring reed; and he stood in the gate. — EZEKIEL xl. 2, 3.

IT is a complex and mysterious thing, — this human life which it is appointed us to live. At first glance it seems as if it were simply the outflowing of ourselves from day to day, very much as water flows from a jar, without effort or design or law of movement. The element of choice, the element of chance plays such an important part in every human life, — the choices are so capricious, the chances are so uncertain, — that it seems as if it were impossible to recognize in any life a persistent force of which it was the out-

growth; to find in it anything that could be called its law.

Take the history of a day, or the larger history of a life from the cradle to the grave; what subtle breaths of desire, of affection and repulsion determine its movements! What accidents, casual contacts, unexpected pressures of circumstance carve its outlines! Day by day the tapestry is woven. We cannot stop the play of the loom. But what a wilderness of aimless lines comes out in the fabric! What a blur of unfinished patterns, overlying each other! What a tangle of broken threads! This is true of some lives more than of others; but in ordinary human life, as it flows out from us and around us, there is such a complexity of forces, and such an elasticity and spontaneity of movement, that at first glance it seems difficult to recognize it as the product of law.

But a deeper glance reveals to us the persistent and inexorable action of law in the shaping of our life. Indeed it is easy to formulate a theory of life in which it seems as if it were all law, nothing but law, law that crushed

all freedom and spontaneity out of life. This happens when you try to reduce life to a department of physics. You find everywhere law; only the law lies not so much in the life, as in the things that press upon it and give it direction. The water that flows from a jar falls and sparkles and runs on the ground with no choice of its own. Every drop is the slave of law. So it seems when we look upon life and treat it as a chapter of mechanics; as if it were simply the product of the forces that beat upon it, as if the measure of the forces gave the measure of the life, as if the colors and shapes it takes in its outflow were all determined by the angle of the sunbeam that strikes it, and the lay of the ground where it falls.

According to this theory, the spontaneity that life seems to possess, its freedom of play, its sense of choice, are all an illusion. It moves simply as it yields to the pressure of a force from without. The forces, it is true, are complex. There is antagonism and interplay. This produces the crossing lines and the blurred patterns; but every life, as it unrolls, whatever its strength or weakness, whatever its

beauty or deformity, is simply the product of circumstance and contact and temperament. The man is no more responsible for his life, than the weaver is responsible for the loom and the yarn which the master furnishes him.

It is evident that this conception of life is inadequate and false. It is all the more dangerous, because it falls in with a current fashion of thought and contains a half-truth. We read so much nowadays of force and law, that it is natural to speak of the energy of life under these terms; only, if we take our conceptions of force and law entirely from the physical world, we reduce all the intricate and mysterious movement of life to the irresponsible throbbings of a machine. This is the taint in our current philosophy, which in many a man and woman is working enfeeblement of the moral sense, and depressing the energy of the will, till it bends and breaks in the toils and endurances of the world. Morality is possible only with freedom of choice. Whatever be the pressure of the forces without, there must be a force within, holding unfettered its

power to yield or resist. Else, in any high interpretation, virtue and vice are dreams.

But this conception of life as a product of law holds a truth, which is full of moral touch and has manifold applications.

In the prophet's vision he saw a spectral temple, lifting its walls on the site of the ruined shrine on Mount Moriah, and beheld a man with a measuring reed standing in the gate. The vision of the Hebrew seer throws into a picture a thought which will be of the utmost value in our efforts to build up strong, fruitful, consistent character.

The life which each of us is living is neither a formless, accidental jumble of thoughts, words and deeds, which link themselves together without any compelling force or law of combination; nor is it the fixed and inevitable result of forces that lie outside the domain of the will, and that beat resistlessly upon our life for good or evil. There is both freedom and law in our life; freedom working within law, along the lines of law. Every human life is a structure like that temple in the prophet's dream. It is built up stone by stone. And

every stone has a meaning. It falls into its place in obedience to a law. The design of the structure determines the position of the stone. The building grows according to the law of the design. But what determines the design? Here is where the element of choice comes in. We can choose one design or another. But the design once chosen determines the character of the building. It gives the law of measurement to every stone and door-post and pinnacle. It is like a man with a measuring reed standing in the gate.

Now there are certain things, which, you will agree with me, fall entirely within our choice, which have such power and influence in the shaping of character that they become the measuring reeds of life. They give the design on the lines of which the structure of the life is built.

One of these things is a man's estimate of himself. A man's habitual thought of himself to a certain extent gives the measurement of his life. "As he thinketh in his heart, so is he," the proverb reads. There is a sense in which these words are manifestly untrue.

St. Paul mentions a contingency which not unfrequently happens: "If a man think himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. Let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another." It is true that a man is always a prejudiced judge concerning himself. It is also true that fruitful energy, consciousness of power, is generally silent, makes no loud claims, recognizes its limitations, lets its work speak for itself, has less joy in the splendor of the achievement, than shame for the shadow which is thrown upon it by the unattained ideal. But St. Paul's words are directed against self-conceit and pretence and swagger, not against a proper estimate of one's dignity, worth and capacity.

It remains true, in a measure at least: What a man holds himself to be, he tries to be, and in the long run becomes. He builds the house of his life according to his estimate of himself. If he count himself a cur, his life will be a kennel, whatever money he may lavish on it, and however richly he may decorate it. If he recognize and hold himself true to a royalty of

soul, his life will be a palace. Though it have the dimensions of a hut, and the roof cover but a single room, that room will be a throne-chamber.

Have you never noticed how Christ, in His effort to lift men to higher levels of life, kept in sight this law? Never was such dignity dreamed for human nature as He gave to it. Everywhere He went, to whomever He spoke; in forms of humanity that had come under the yoke of toil, that had felt the lash of suffering, that had been trampled in the mire of shame; everywhere, where human eyes looked out upon Him, He revered the manhood in man. And He gave new crowns to that manhood. He did not hesitate to put upon its brow divine crowns. He brought it into kindredship with God. He called men God's children. And all, that He might win them to a life that had the purity and beauty of God in it, a life that should be worthy of the sons of God.

Christ recognized the law: Man is the measure of his life. His estimate of his own worth gives the quality of his daily deed and word.

The law runs from the sublime heights to which Christ carried it, to the beaten paths where men pass to and fro on the business of the world. If you hold yourself copper, your life will be copper. If you count yourself gold and diamond, your life will be gold and diamond. You must first estimate yourself as something cheap and mean, before you can sell yourself to a cheap and mean sin.

But there is another measuring reed of life. As he goes on with the years, every man makes not only an estimate of himself, but also a philosophy of life. It may not be distinctly formulated. It may never be put in speech. It may hang like a vague mist in the atmosphere of the soul. But sooner or later, consciously or unconsciously, we gather from our experiences in the world, our contacts with men and our readings from our own heart, a philosophy of life which becomes to us a sort of working creed.

We can adopt for our philosophy of life whatever we choose. Life is rich in texts and confirmations for every article of our creed. If we choose to explain life as a sel-

fish, brutal struggle for existence, as a dull, lingering misery to be borne simply with patience or defiance, as a hunt for pleasurable sensations, as a plot for the mastery of our fellows, as a school for the education of character, as an opportunity of lighting up this earth with something of the life that pulses in the heart of God; in every case, life rises up and answers: "Yes, that is my explanation of myself. I can furnish proofs of your theory. You have translated the cipher on my heart. Take me, read me, treat me as you choose; I will supply you with plenty of facts to substantiate your philosophy of me."

It is evident, therefore, that a man has a large range of selection in choosing his theory of life. For a dozen conflicting theories, he can draw a line of argument and marshal an array of facts. It is evident, too, that a man's theory of life has everything to do with the way in which he takes up his life and lives it day by day. His treatment of his business, his pleasures, his duties, his temptations, his fellow-men, will be determined by his answer to the question: "What, after all, is the mean-

ing of my life, its purpose, the highest possible outcome of it?"

The horror of it is, we can bring to these questions whatever answer we please. Life echoes back our own answer. She comes to us and sits down by us and goes to and fro over our threshold, in the very feature, step and accent of our theory. Our short and easy creed, in which we state our practical solution of life's problems for working purposes, fashions our life. The smallest details of life take tone and color from our creed. Our life makes a constant effort to adjust itself to our theory. How can it be otherwise? Our theory is a measuring reed, with which we stand in the gate, and which we apply to every stone and beam that go into the structure of our life. Is it any wonder that the whole structure is simply a sort of flower, which has blossomed on the stalk of our measuring reed?

XI.

Phases of Unreal Religion.

XI.

PHASES OF UNREAL RELIGION.

If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. — ST. JAMES i. 26.

IT is very evident that St. James, in this passage, gives us only one token of unreal religion. An unbridled tongue is certainly a mark of a frivolous or a venomous heart. It is well that we should keep this in mind. But, on the other hand, the man who keeps his mouth shut is not necessarily a saint. He may have nothing to say; or he may be simply astute, or a coward, or a gentleman. There are many marks of the hypocrite besides an unbridled tongue; and it is worth while to sketch some of the phases of unreal religion which are most current among men, and which, in many cases, are such good imitations that they readily pass as genuine coin. The relig-

ion of a man, if it be real, is such an all-important feature of his character, such an all-compelling force in his life, the best things are so easily counterfeited, and our hearts are such subtle traitors, that we all have need to study the various forms in which unreality creeps into, and vitiates the religious life.

Let me classify them under six heads, as follows: religion as a mask; religion as merchandise; religion as a decoration; religion as etiquette; religion as a caprice; religion as a question.

I will not dwell upon the first class. I have too much faith in human nature to believe that religion is often used consciously and deliberately as a mask. Men continually veil their failings with fair names, but they are not apt to wear their religion simply as a "cloak of maliciousness." Even the Pharisees, whom Christ scourged, and immortalized into infamy, honestly believed that they were supremely and exclusively the righteous men of Jerusalem. They were actors, but they played their part so well that they deceived even them-

selves. This is the fate of their successors in this generation. The conscious hypocrite is such a moral freak that nature, especially Anglo-Saxon nature, produces him only at long intervals. The follies and vices of reputable men spring generally from inherent weakness rather than deliberate intention.

But while the Pharisee of old cannot exactly be accused of making his religion a mask, he can fairly be said to have used his religion as merchandise. He was righteous according to his standard; only his righteousness was of a low type and put to low uses. It was a sort of pedestal on which he climbed to lift himself above the herd of publicans and sinners, and receive the admiration of those who thought more of the pedestal than of the statue. He made loud professions, and recited long prayers on conspicuous street-corners for the sake of the reputation and influence he got thereby. His religion was honest after a fashion, but he used it for personal advantage. It was a commercial investment which made good dividends.

This sort of religion did not die with the Pharisees. Religion means integrity, truth-

fulness, purity, brotherly kindness. Even the world pays a high price for these things, for it cannot get along without them. They are the main threads of the web on which civilization weaves its embroideries. In a mercantile civilization like ours these virtues are invaluable. A man may have them without saying much about his religion, but if he claim to be religious, people who judge the world by its advertisements will be apt to credit him with these virtues until they find out their mistake.

We always suspect the man who protests his honesty overmuch. None but a shallow fool sets his virtues to variations on a trumpet. But to speak the truth and deal squarely and profess high ideals simply because it pays is not an unusual thing, and it makes merchandise of religion. The fruits of righteousness cannot ripen, tied on dead sticks in this fashion. If they are to be kept from rotting, they must grow naturally on a living stalk that strikes its roots into the core of the character. And yet you find men and women who ask nothing more of their religion than to keep up appearances, and preserve their respectability,

and supply them with enough of the small coins of virtue to rattle in their pocket and do traffic on the street.

Closely allied to religion as merchandise is religion as a decoration. The only difference is that religion, when used as merchandise, has reference chiefly to personal gain; when used as a decoration, it has reference chiefly to the æsthetic enjoyment of the possessor. Religion as a decoration, I am inclined to think, is even more common than religion as merchandise. It is a step upward on the moral ladder, and it yields itself to subtle refinements of unreality which do not horrify the conscience, and which often, with their soft voices and light footfalls, glide by that sentinel without challenge.

No one can give even a side glance at religion, without seeing that it brings to our common, dusty life exquisite elements of beauty. It draws radiant horizons around the cottage-door and the palace-porch. It pours out the wine of life into golden chalices. I do not wonder that men who have difficulty with dogmas and dislike rites of worship, nevertheless

hesitate to set themselves to the fruitless task of driving religion off the face of the earth. The grind of the world and the buffetings of circumstance would be simply intolerable, without the touch of unseen hands and the gleam of celestial visions that religion brings to men. We all recognize this: but many recognize it only just enough to treat their religion as the gold fringe of life. It is a shelter when they are out in the night and the storm smites them. They appreciate its value in these trying crises, but meantime, while the sun shines, they treat it with the delicate reverence with which we treat a rare and precious piece of porcelain that we would not imperil in the ordinary uses of life. Their religion, in short, is an embellishment of their leisure, instead of a fundamental conviction and law of conduct.

They call themselves Christians; but the interior life of the religion of Christ, its appeal to the heart, its errand in the world, its demand of personal service, its law of worship and discipline, its claim for support in the upbuilding of its churches, the extension

of its missions and the distribution of its charities, stir them to as little purpose as the breath of the summer breeze stirs the rose on its stem. They go to church if it be convenient. They listen to the music and the preaching in much the same attitude of mind as they listen to a concert or oration. They seldom or never come to the Eucharist. That is too close an approach to the inner powers and consecrations of Christ's religion. There is no actual worship, no self-study, no resolve, no sense of divine presence, no opening of the heart to divine truth, no grasp of divine grace to uplift the life, and deepen its motives, and strengthen it against the downward drifts of the world. Their religion is simply a decoration, only less artificial than if it were a mask.

Another phase of unreal religion is where it becomes a form of etiquette. This is not conspicuously a vice of our American Christianity. We are generally too careless and off-hand to pay much regard to etiquette of any sort. Our religion, even when real, is often ill-mannered, and lacks the fine reverences which are the inheritance of older races, and the results of

the training of the more highly elaborated rituals of worship. But the simplest rites and the most barren forms may degenerate into mere ritual and empty formality. You do not escape this peril by making a barn your sanctuary, and substituting swinging melodies for the *Te Deum*. Forms of worship are necessary; either good ones or bad ones, either dignified and impressive, or frivolous and vulgar. But whatever the form, there is danger of losing the spirit in the form, of using the form by itself and for itself. Religion then becomes mere etiquette; a formal bow to the royal presence at a court-reception; not without its value as an official recognition of divine things, but bringing no spiritual force into the soul or moral fruitage into the life.

The exact opposite of this is another phase of unreality in religion,—emotionalism. This, on the other hand, is distinctively a vice of American Christianity. We are eminently practical and hard-headed in the affairs of the world. Emotion does not figure very largely on the street or in the drawing-room. In the ordinary concerns of life, most of us try to do

what we think is right, with or without emotion. The doing of the right thing at the right time is what counts. We do not wait for some gust of enthusiasm or irresistible impulse. But many people seem to think that in religion it is only enthusiasm and impulse that count. Duty becomes the sport of caprice. They attend church when they feel like it. They pray when they feel like it. They come to the sacrament when they feel like it. Feeling is the wind that swings the weathercock of their religious life, and it blows, in turn, from all points of the compass. The sole motive and test of their religion are their emotional experiences.

Undoubtedly some people honestly think that all this is in the interests of reality in religion. On the contrary, it taints and poisons religion with unreality. We have been taught that the heart is the main thing. Yes, but the heart does not mean the accidents and caprices of emotion. Its office in religion is to supply the persistent convictions and principles, which are the motor-powers to build up the life in religious habits, and hold it

true to God and righteousness, whatever the emotional weather.

The last phase of unreal religion that I shall mention is where it resolves itself into an ever-repeated, never-answered question. This is the picture of many a man's religion in these days. We have fallen upon an age whose symbol is an interrogation mark. We are all asking questions of things in heaven and earth. That a question has been answered, and has had its answer registered among those truths, which are beyond the reach of the implements and all the possible advances of science, is, with many people, no reason why it should not be perpetually reopened for some new answer. So they are to-day running hither and thither, knocking at the doors of dead paganisms and modern theosophies for new gospels which shall unlock the mysteries of life and destiny. Their religion is reduced to a pleasure excursion or an infatuated hunt in the dark continents of unexplored truth. When they do not get lost in the jungles or perish of malaria, they come back with nothing better than some grotesque fetich of low-

type religion, or some fantastic theory of scientific spiritualism, which runs counter to all the verified facts of science.

In God's honor and for our soul's sake, let us hunt for truth in every age and on every shore. Let us read our Bible by the light of all the torches that can be flung on its pages: but this orphaned, unhoused, vagrant religion, without name or ancestry or fireside or roof; this religion which is not a life but an intellectual picnic, which is perpetually out-of-doors, asking questions of every passer-by and of every ship that comes to port; this religion which, the last day of every month, pulls out its memorandum-book to write out a new creed; this religion which, as the apostle said, is "ever learning, and never coming to the knowledge of the truth," is profoundly unreal, and it results, with its fever of unrest and perpetual tramp, in an unreal life.

All things have their counterfeits; and the most pernicious counterfeits are those of the most precious things. There are many forms of fictitious religion, but it is enough to study these six: religion as a mask, as merchan-

dise, as a decoration, as etiquette, as a caprice, and as a question.

Can we not now read that passage in St. James' epistle with a larger interpretation than at first glance is suggested? "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain." Unreal religion has many faces and names. But let us not stop in negations. It is not enough to detect counterfeits. In this matter of religion we must know and have the real thing. Let us read further. With what a clear ring does the genuine coin strike the pavements on which we tread in the practical work of life! "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this: To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

Love and purity, — these are the divine marks by which we test that religion, which God has put on this earth to redeem life and lift it into His light and joy.

XII.

Disguises and Defiances.

XII.

DISGUISES AND DEFIANCES.

*Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity;
and sin as it were with a cart rope. — ISAIAH v. 18.*

HYPOCRISY, it is said, is the homage which vice pays to virtue. The more it abounds, therefore, the higher we may consider the repute of virtue and the more commanding its sovereignty. Hypocrisy is essentially a civilized sin. A savage or a tramp, one who has no place or recognition in a well-organized society, is never a hypocrite; or, if he make pretence to a virtue which he does not possess, it is always the crudest sort of virtue, and the pretence is so thin that it deceives nobody, and does service only for an emergency. A well-sustained and impenetrable hypocrisy argues that the man moves in conditions of life which are pitched to a high-

keyed public opinion, and that he has a keen sense of the exactions and the vengeance of the current morality.

Society, for its self-preservation and well-being, provides that virtue should be in the ascendant, should sit on the throne, should hold the empire and make the laws of the world. Indeed, we, all of us are sufficiently alive to the beauty and utility of virtue, and we always insist that our neighbor should be virtuous. If his bad conduct hurt us, and in the long run it is sure to hurt somebody, we cry out in behalf of virtue with no uncertain sound, and our appreciation of its value acquires a keenness of edge which cuts like a knife.

There have been periods in the history of the world, when vice has ostentatiously unmasked itself in high places, and, with a triumphant audacity, has made itself the fashion and the social law. Such was the epoch of the decadence of the old Roman civilization. Such were the times of the restoration of the English monarchy under Charles II.

The moral collapse at the Restoration was

the inevitable unbending of the bow after the rigors of the Puritan régime. England was tired of unmelodious psalm-singing and endless homilies on the sin of eating Christmas pies and dancing around May-poles. It welcomed with a strange alacrity and a strange forgetfulness, the exiled prince, whose morals, none too good to begin with, had been debauched in foreign courts, and who brought back to the palace of his fathers nothing of royalty, except enchanting manners, graceful wit and an insatiable thirst for pleasure. You remember the fierce philippic of Macaulay in his essay on Milton: "Then came those days, never to be recalled without a blush, the days of servitude without loyalty, and sensuality without love, of dwarfish talents and gigantic vices, the paradise of cold hearts and narrow minds, the golden age of the coward, the bigot and the slave."

But the enthronement of vice was only for a day. Men on the morrow smote it on the face, and hurled it from the seat which gave it power and lustre.

This is the history of fashionable and jew-

elled vice in every age. When those, who inherit wealth and polite culture and the accumulated embellishments of life, conspicuously trample on the laws of righteousness, the insulted world calls them to account, and, in self-defence, consigns them to social outlawry. So plainly is Virtue the eldest-born and the fairest of the daughters of God. So indisputably is she recognized as the sceptred empress and law-giver of this earth. That old Mount of Sinai, from whose summit God declared the eternal moralities, is the primeval rock which underlies the world's moral history, and on it are based the pillars of its social structure.

In the ordinary conditions of civilized, and especially of Christianized life, therefore, a man must at least make a formal obeisance to virtue. He must be outwardly righteous according to the standards of the day. There are certain moralities of which the world takes care, and the pretence of which, at least, it exacts from those who receive its favors and good-will. To make the pretence do duty for the actual practice of morality is hypocrisy. It is the counterfeit coin of the common vir-

tues that are necessary to our social life. This is the crude, vulgar form in which the world recognizes the sin.

But there is a deeper, subtler form of hypocrisy, the definition of which we owe to Christianity. It includes under the word not only a false righteousness, but also a mechanical righteousness. Our Lord, in His deep, large treatment of morality, disclosed its true seat and origin, — the heart. If there were not there a desire and purpose of goodness, He likened the life to an unclean platter and a whited sepulchre. He brought the touch of a divine power to the hidden springs of character. He made virtue sweet and tender and penetrating. He gave it easy and joyous movement. He opened to it boundless possibilities, by making love its root and impelling force.

Even those who deny the full claims of Christ, accept Him as the revealer of a new morality, and are indebted to Him for all that is profound and effective in the moral culture, which they charge with the work that religion alone can do in the world. The morality that

He enunciated wrapped its roots around a living spring of righteousness in our nature.

This accounts for His peculiar treatment of the Pharisees. They were unquestionably the most respectable and, seemingly, the most religious men of the Jewish nation. Morality was their special care. They were the elect and commissioned exemplars of righteousness. They reduced it to delicate refinements, the exposition of which constituted a library, and required the study of a lifetime. Yet that living righteousness, which burned with its white flame in the bosom of Christ, flashed out in indignant protest and scorn against the morality of the Pharisees. It was because that morality had no root in love, and bore no fruitage of love. It was hard and narrow and ostentatious and merciless; but it was not altogether a sham. It was artificial and mechanical. It exhausted its energies in formalities and appearances. It took no account of the man's interior life, his habitual purpose and desire, his fundamental principles of conduct. It was content with an outward observance of a code of regulations. It was an elaborately

embroidered robe, which a man wore on public occasions, in deference to the demands of an artificial virtue.

Christ put upon the brow of Phariseeism a name which it has worn like a brand from that day to this. He called it hypocrisy. This is the name of the mechanical imitation of righteousness in every age. It is not confined to the Church, as some men suppose. The repentant Publican, rather than the Pharisee, feels at home before the altar of Christ. But the atmosphere of the world is more favorable and less exacting to the Pharisaic type of morality. We must remember that the world of the Pharisees was different from our modern world. Its forms of speech and habits of life were ecclesiastical, whereas ours are secular. But at bottom the two worlds are the same. They are content with the formalities of virtue. Hypocrisy is bad, whether it be a sheer pretence of virtue, or simply a slavish and enforced virtue, compelled by the pressure of public opinion; but there is something that is worse, — an open scorn and defiance of virtue.

If our Lord uttered woe on the heartless and pretentious morality of His day, the prophet uttered woe on the confessed and ostentatious immorality of his time. Isaiah's words, as well as Christ's, have a bearing on our modern life: "Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart rope." Men hate hypocrisy. A profitable virtue that is not real, or a formal virtue that is not large and loving, moves us to scorn or pity. But, strange to say, the hatred of hypocrisy is not always in the interests of virtue. It is possible for a bad man as well as a good man to escape this sin, but I do not think that he is altogether to be congratulated on the results.

"I will not be a hypocrite," says one, and, in his horror of hypocrisy, he rushes into an open and shameless evil life. This is what the prophet means in his graphic picture, "Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart rope." He depicts a class of men who have deliberately harnessed themselves to evil, as a horse or mule is harnessed to a loaded wagon. There are forms of iniquity which are difficult and

laborious. Those who get over any ground with them must pull them with a cart rope. It is grievous business, but some men choose it, and take more trouble to be bad than actually is necessary to be good.

And they prosecute ostentatiously the business that they have chosen. They take no care to conceal the evil industry of their life. It is the instinct of sin to disguise itself. It usually skulks behind an assumed goodness. It takes to itself virtuous names. It puts on masks to hide itself, not only from the eyes of men, but also from the eyes of conscience. But the man who drags sin with a cart rope boasts only one virtue, and that is a real one: he is no hypocrite. He has thrown appearances to the winds. He does not attempt to keep on speaking terms with the moralities, whose names even the world quotes with respect, and with which most people affect to be intimate. He drags his iniquity conspicuously on the highway, in the daylight. He does not care to conceal the coat of arms on the carriage, or the livery of the driver who holds the reins and snaps over him the whip.

Perhaps no one ever fully commits himself to this sort of life until he has, or thinks that he has, arrived at the conclusion that all goodness in the world is a sham; that the virtue to which men sing praises is simply a convenient fiction, which they affect to believe, and pretend to possess; that, as there is no real righteousness on the earth, so there is no sovereign righteousness in the heavens; that God is simply a dumb force, without moral quality, and indifferent to the moral quality of His creatures. Hence the prophet makes such a one say, in presumptuous taunt and irony: "Let Him make speed, and hasten His work, that we may see it; and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know it."

Goodness is supreme and eternal. Whatever defeats it may suffer, it will triumph in the end. However it may seem to be otherwise, it is a good thing for a man at the last, in this life and in the life to come. This is an act of faith, it may be, but it is an act of faith authenticated by the drift of things in this visible world, and it is an act of faith

which keeps most men, in desire, at least, and in purpose, on the side of goodness. It is only when a man has lost this faith, that he can deliberately wear the harness and insignia of defiant sin, and taunt the righteousness which hides itself in the heavens and delays its vengeance.

Is this rude picture, culled from the page of the old Hebrew prophet, unsuited to these smooth times and this Christianized civilization? I do not suppose that the man who drags sin with a cart rope is usually found in the House of God. He is more apt to rail at the Church, and all that it represents, and tries to keep alive and make abound in the world.

But there are insidious approaches to his condition, of which all of us have need to beware. Hypocrisy is so mean and pitiable a sin, that it is considered by many almost a virtue to be frank, not simply in confessing, but in doing evil. Do none of you ever say: "I know it is wrong. It is an offence against God, against myself, against my neighbor. It is an unquestionable violation of what is pure

and honest. I can see the harm that it works; but I do not disguise it. I do not pretend to be other than I am. I am at least frank. I do not affect a virtue which I do not possess"?

Well, this is one alternative to hypocrisy. Did you ever think that there is another,—to recognize the evil in your nature and the sin in your life; to look at it with keen, brave eyes, illumined by the study of God's law; to guard against it, day by day and moment by moment; and resolutely to fight it, in its first impulses, in its fiercest assaults, by the help of God's grace? Is not this a possible alternative? It is not demanded of you that you be sinless; but you need not be the liveried slave of sin. It is not required of you that you be perfect; but you can enlist and do battle on the side of right. With all your mistakes and your failures, from the very roots of your nature, and in the inmost recesses of your heart, you can be loyal to God and His righteousness. You are to begin, and, to the end, you are to prove, this loyalty, not by standing apart from your fellows, and, in a supercilious

sanctity, reciting the catalogue of your virtues, but by smiting your breast with the cry: "God be merciful to me, a sinner."

"I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other."



XIII.

The Great Heresy.

XIII.

THE GREAT HERESY.

*Ye have said, It is vain to serve God: and what profit
is it that we have kept His ordinance?*

MALACHI iii. 14.

AS never before, men are now bringing to bear archæological science and critical study on the body of sacred literature which we call the Bible. It has become a passion in these days to challenge the traditions, and rewrite the chronicles, of the ancient world. When so many of the landmarks have been swept over by the dust of time, there is a temptation to consider history as open country for the vigorous exercise of the imagination; and some of the German scholars are riding their theories at a breakneck pace through the scriptures of the Old Testament. We need not fear. If they can bring from their explorations of what is so venerable and so precious

in the moral life of the world, certified facts, we will accept the facts with gratitude, and welcome them as contributions to our stock of truth.

Faith walks hand in hand with Knowledge along all the path where Knowledge can make sure her footing. Where the path drops off in the infinite spaces, into which the soul sends its cries, there Faith walks alone. Knowledge can never impair or supersede the mission of Faith. It only illumines her path. It is the torch-bearer which accompanies her on the first stage of her journey.

A closer and more accurate reading of the Bible is already bringing the religious world of to-day to the recognition of an overlooked and wellnigh forgotten truth. Men will wander in the mist and become the prey of mischievous mistakes and foolish fears, until they altogether recognize the truth, that God has revealed Himself in the history of the world by voices and institutions which are older than the Bible, and of which the Bible is simply the record. To state the truth in another form, the Holy Scriptures are the inspired chronicles

of the Church, the elder Church prophetic of Christ, and the living Church ordained by Christ. They differ from other authentic history and religious literature in that they were specifically inspired by the spirit, and have been peculiarly protected by the providence, of God.

But it is curious to note how little they state or claim for themselves in the matter of authorship or date of composition. In regard to most of the sacred documents, both the author and the date are left open questions for critical investigation and conjecture. Here, of course, the tradition of the Church is of value; but, in any age, the tradition is liable to arrest and question at the bar of newly discovered knowledge. A verified fact is as necessary to be recognized in the history of God's revelations, as in the history of the geologic rocks or of an Egyptian dynasty. Let us bear in mind, however, that the tradition of yesterday is as apt to hit the truth as the guess of to-day; and let us bear in mind, moreover, that the cause of truth is not likely to be served by an irreverent handling of those

unique monuments of literature, which enshrine the authentic voices and institutions of God, and in which all that is best in the spiritual life of men has found its verification and its guidance.

Whatever the surmises or the conclusions of the critics, those prophetic voices of the Old Testament will be forever sacred and vital; for they deal with man in regard to those elemental facts and relations, which persist through all the advance of the world's knowledge and civilization. No questions of date or authorship can impair the value of a passage like this: "Your words have been stout against me, saith the Lord. Yet ye say, What have we spoken so much against thee? Ye have said, It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept His ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of Hosts? And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered."

Here is the statement of the old problem, the problem that reappears in every generation,

the problem that perplexes men to-day. Those who honestly try to serve God in this life have frequently to deny themselves many pleasant things, and do not seem to be especially favored. On the other hand, those who care nothing for God, and trample His laws under foot in their reach after power and pleasure, frequently get what they desire, and draw upon their heads no conspicuous punishment. In other words, the distribution of the good things of this world does not seem to be on the lines by which God has defined righteousness and wickedness. The Psalmist in his day vexed his heart on this problem. He saw how the ungodly men of this evil world are filled with God's treasure, how they have children at their desire, and leave the rest of their substance for their babes. "I was envious," he says, "at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no bands in their death; but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men. They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth. They say,

how doth God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High? ”

Have we never said something like this, when we look around in the world and see how wickedness sometimes thrives, and has sumptuous fare, and sits in high places? The distress of it is, not simply that wickedness is so skilful and adroit that it eludes punishment, but that oftentimes it is the very path and instrument by which success is achieved. The good man has scruples which tie his hands before an opportunity, on which the man of easy conscience without hesitation leaps, and rides gayly along the highway to wealth and power. You are grieved, you who have scorned the low methods and trickery of your neighbor. Your nice sense of what is fitting and right has worked to your disadvantage. While you are trudging along slowly and painfully on the high, clean path that you have marked out for your feet, he is carelessly splashing through the mud, and you see him pull up with smiling face at the palace-gate.

It is vexatious, I agree with you; but it ought not to breed bitter thoughts, or put us

out of conceit with virtue, or make us hurl hard questions at God. If our goodness be sound and genuine, we will not murmur if it fail to be decorated with the world's guerdons. Let us look over the hedge of our egoism, and study the laws of things.

God rules on this earth as well as in heaven. He rewards every man according to his work. If we work for wealth, eagerly, tirelessly, if we organize our work wisely, and observe the laws which govern the making of money, we shall get wealth. If we long for sensual pleasure or social distinction or notoriety or fame or power or leadership, and take the right path to these things, without we break down in the journey, and get trampled under foot, we shall find them at the end of the road. If we are willing and able to pay the price, we can buy anything we choose in the market of the world. But we must pay the price, and we must not expect any other thing than that which we purchase. It is not always a shameful price. The energy and skill and persistent purpose and plodding industry, which the world values so highly, and rewards so richly, are virtues

which enter into the make-up of all manly character. Without these sturdy fibres, rooted in the nature and running through the life, the fairest spiritual graces hang like sick and drooping flowers on the stalk. That we have failed to win the world's prizes is not necessarily a proof of our goodness. It may be simply a proof of our feebleness.

It is a mistake to imagine that wickedness only can thrive on this earth. The Psalmist was not long troubled with his questions touching the prosperity of the wicked. He soon perceived that it was only a low estimate of things, a narrow and short-sighted vision of life, which suggested his questions.

If we look closely at the world, if we watch the history of men, — the slow, steady swing of events marching to their conclusion, — we shall see that even this secular life is organized in the interests of virtue. Wickedness works it harm. It cannot endure, if it permit bad men to flourish. In its own defence, it must make them feel the smart of its whips. In the long run, it recognizes goodness, brings out its fairest crowns for its brows, pays it for its

service with its richest coin. It may not be wealth or official honors; but surely the love and respect and gratitude of men count for something in the estimates of a prosperous life.

These, however, are not the rewards of righteousness, even on this earth. The men who have toiled for it the most keenly, in whose life it has shone forth in the noblest and most resplendent types, have scorned the applause of the world. They were not working for that. It was the sharp hunger in their soul that kept them at their arduous toil. And the moral power into which they grew was itself its own reward. Though the world were silent, and swept by them on its eager quests, they were content. They carried in their soul an ineffable peace, a calm, deep joy, a vision of things invisible, a grasp of things eternal, which lifted them above the world, and cheapened its treasures and its honors. They kept their place in the world, they wrought in it that truth might conquer, that the law of God might prevail, that the cry of the world's great pain might be hushed, that God's glory might

shine on the faces of men ; but the plaudits of the world they could not hear, so sweet and strong was the celestial music ringing in their ears.

Does this seem an heroic rôle, fit only for the saints of history? There is not a man or woman to-day, however narrow or obscure his lot, but may live this life, and walk with God in the daily paths of his appointed toil. Only in this way can we strike the highest notes in our nature. Only in this way can we realize the highest values of the little span of life that is given us between the cradle and the grave.

There is one heresy that is the worst of all heresies, for it poisons the springs of the moral life. It is formulated in that old cry which the prophet Malachi recorded of the men of his time: "It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept His ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of Hosts? And now we call the proud happy. Yea, they that work wickedness are set up, yea, they that tempt God are even delivered."

What is this but saying, that this is not

God's world, but the devil's world; and that they who would get the world's favors must do the devil's work? Nay, he pays his servants in his own coin, and that coin can never buy the best things, the enduring things, the real happiness of this earth.

What profit is it to serve God? I have told you some of the profit, not all of it. This life does not end with the grave. It stretches on into distances and experiences that we cannot measure. You must wait till the end for the full adjustment of values. This is the answer that Malachi makes to the question touching the profit of goodness. "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God, and him that serveth Him not."

XIV.

Modern Sainthood.



XIV.

MODERN SAINTHOOD.

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

EPHESIANS vi. 10-12.

THE age of saints is past, we are told. What Christianity needs to-day is reality and strength. Your modern reproduction of the saint is neither real nor strong; and he is out of place in these energetic days, when life is adjusted to a hard framework of facts, and the man who succeeds has no time to dream. I have perhaps put in words the lurking thought in the minds of men, even of the average Christian, who comes to church and tries to carry his religion into the world.

And yet I am far from thinking that the man who says this has lost his faith in, or his need of, or his capacity for, sainthood. He simply means to repudiate some antiquated type of sainthood which once did service to the world, and now comes forth from its sepulchre to wander like a ghost with strange speech and costume in a life which it cannot understand, or sympathize with, or address with intelligible message.

Religion is a living thing for living men. Above everything else, it must prove its adaptation to the actual needs of the world. Men who have taken up life with strong hands, who are thrust into its fierce pressures, demand of their religion, first of all, reality. It must look them in the face. It must speak to them in a dialect that they can understand. If it exhaust its energies in picturesque attitudes, or catalogue itself simply as a department of antique art, men with a taste for history or æsthetics will discuss it, and pass judgment upon it, and perhaps give it a certain measure of patronage; but the great world will vote it out of the practical issues of life. This has

been the fate of a certain fashion of sainthood, which makes much of antique methods of life in its effort to attain high types of character. It may be genuine, but it seems to average men and women to lack strength, simplicity and directness. It is out of joint with modern life. It is like a tourist who does not know the language of the country which he visits. It has none of the ease and spontaneity and large, free movement, which belong to strong forces and compel the respect of men. It does not look out on common human life with those kindly, sympathetic eyes, which draw the homely cares and sorrows and affections of men within the shelter of its love and benediction. This surely is not a conception of sainthood which is profitable to the world or fitted for our day.

Is sainthood then, in these modern times, impossible? Have the need of it and the conditions of it vanished from modern life? No, a thousand times, no. Sainthood means simply human life lifted up to its highest range of moral energy. It is particularly, in Christian phraseology, the love and law of Christ dominating a soul and carrying it to superior

heights of goodness. Is this a thing that belongs to a peculiar epoch of church history, or a peculiar condition of the world's civilization? Is it a thing of posture and vesture, a thing that can be identified by the passing fashion or the accidental forms in which it asserts itself, a thing that the world can outgrow, a thing that can lose its value or its power in the lives of men? No. Human nature has its unalterable needs and its undecaying possibilities. The religion of Christ is the complete, divine response to the needs of that nature. According to the measure in which the power of Christ fulfils its work in a human life, that life becomes a saintly life. By just so much, it gains in moral force, moral conquest, moral fruitfulness.

Sainthood is simply the highest part of our manhood bearing its spiritual flower. It is of perennial growth. It will last as long as the religion of Christ shall be a quickening power in human life. No change of climate can wither it, or rob it of its perfume, or blast its fruitage.

I have said all this for one purpose. We are

members of Christ's Catholic Church, which recites in its Baptismal creed, "I believe in the communion of saints." It claims the memory and the glory of all the saints whose names are emblazoned in the annals of Christian history. Wherever life has been caught up by the breath of God's spirit to high levels of vision and energy, there is its country and its lineage, and there it finds the shining names in its lines of ancestry.

But this fact does not exhaust the meaning of that phrase, "communion of saints." Communion means fellowship, participation in a common life, obligation to a common law, sympathy of desire, purpose and endeavor. To what extent do you realize that you personally are under obligations to strive the best you may to live a saintly life; that the demands of that life rest upon you day by day? It will not do to say that mediæval and Puritanic fashions of sainthood are grotesque and unsuited to the world in which you live. Is it your purpose and effort to bring your life up to any fashion of sainthood? Do you recognize the play of spiritual forces which have a

sweep and result, beyond the dictates of your tastes and affections, and the demands of the current morality? A saintly life is not the badge of a guild, the privilege of a few chosen souls in a generation. It is for all men, the same as it is for all time.

That we may feel the claim of it more deeply, let us look at it more closely. I have tried to define it in its essential feature. But there is an exhortation in one of the epistles of St. Paul, in which he gives the dominant trait, and explains the perpetual need of sainthood. He does not use the word, but he presents an aspect of the thing, which is of perennial value and makes a peculiar appeal. "Finally, my brethren," he says, "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." The warrior for Christ, "clad in the whole armour of God," "strong in the Lord and in the power

of His might." How the splendid picture glows on the sacred page! Look at it! Let the vision of it burn into your thought, till it kindle all your imagination and desire! There is the saint for all time and for all men. Is there not something in this conception of concern to us; of permanent, priceless value in the issues of our life?

Spiritual strength, — the power of God's might in human character, wrestling against the sin that is lodged in our nature, and the sin that is working the misery of the world, — this is the essence of sainthood. Every saint in the Christian ages has won his name and his spiritual throne simply by an enthusiasm for righteousness, which he has caught from the life and heart of Christ, and an heroic sacrifice and toil to make righteousness thrive on this earth.

It may happen that some of us have need to revise our notions of sainthood. There are two facts which we must consider, as it stands before us and makes upon us its high demand.

In the first place, there is something in our

nature which beats in sympathy with, and response to, genuine sainthood. Have you never, when a boy, had dreams of a life which should transcend the beaten paths where men practise their little prudent virtues, and run panting after the cheap prizes of the world, —dreams of a life which should be fashioned on a grand, persistent purpose, which should sweep it to high achievement, and make it a masterful stroke for God and mankind? Have you never, in your visions of your future self, pictured an ideal of character, in which there should be no meanness, in which the petty selfishnesses of men should have no place, which should stand amid the pressures of the world, strong and tender and pure? This is saintly life and saintly character. The boy or the girl that has not had the dream of it, that has not had his soul leap up with prayer and purpose at the vision of it, has missed the most precious thing in youth. His life is like a day without the deepening flush and the glory of the dawn. And all through our lives, in our highest moments, the vision comes again. The old dream of a soul beating to

grander music than the voices of the crowd and the songs of the roadside haunts us still. However weak and mean men may be, into whatever miry depths they may slide, I do not think that they ever lose their reverence for heroic goodness. It forever charms them and draws them and kindles desire, even though the flame flash only for a moment. There is a cord in our nature which always throbs at the sight of the beauty of goodness.

But there is another fact regarding sainthood, which brings its claim and its power close to our common life. It means simply manhood carried to its highest point. "Ah, is it so?" you ask. "Does it not lay stress on the passive virtues? When it talks of faith and patience and repression of self, does it not throw a slight on those qualities which build up manly character, strength and courage and power of achievement? No. It only takes the highest part of us, and places it where it belongs, on the throne; and our manhood, if we only let it speak, will cry out "Yes" to every demand which the laws of righteousness make upon passion and appetite.

Beyond question, there is a conception of sainthood in these modern days which leans too much to the negative side of Christianity. It cultivates the small, placid virtues, and leaves out the strong, stormy heroisms. It is smooth and decorous and respectable. It is too much engaged in keeping its raiment unsoiled to strike strenuous blows for righteousness. It is therefore unattractive to young, vigorous life. Men who desire to be good and true, to attain high summits of goodness and truth, seem sometimes to exhaust all their strength in the mere act of climbing; so that nothing is left to make their goodness and truth a force in the world. Sanctity means to them simply repression of life. The region that they inhabit has a cold, thin air, where nothing grows but a few famished flowers on the edge of the snow. Do not take this for saintliness. That does not mean life with all the sinews cut. It is, above everything else, strong and manly. It is the might of God clothing the character with spiritual power. It takes all the faculties of our manhood, the faculties by which men strive and achieve suc-

cess, and enlists them in battle against the sin that works the degradation and shame of life. If a man be unmanly, by so much he is unsaintly. Remember that picture of the apostle, the spiritual knight clad in shining armor for the fight of God.

If this be sainthood, never had the world such need of it as now. We are told that this is a critical, uncreative, unenthusiastic age. In some regards it is true. In art, in philosophy, in letters, in political life, it would seem as if the old enthusiasms for high ideals, the warm, unflinching loyalty to immutable principles, had suffered decay. Doubt which dawdles and toys with truth, criticism which is impotent to create, opportunism which dares not act, have invaded wellnigh all the provinces of modern thought. It is hard to realize in these days heroic types of character. Even the sins of the world are mean and shallow sins. Men do not deny God, they ignore Him. They do not question the folly of vice, they are merely cynical of goodness. "The rulers of the darkness of this world, spiritual wickedness in high places," are sleek and respectable,

and sit oftentimes clothed in the white linen of the saints.

But none the less, the religion of Christ wages its old fight against the evil in the world. And it calls for heroes. It calls for men, ay, it calls for women too, who have an enthusiasm for goodness, who can toil and sacrifice that there may be less sin, less suffering in the world. And the hero smites the foe where the Captain puts him in the fight. Sainthood is doing high forms of duty in the spot where God brings us face to face with the duty. It is also doing small duties with large and grand intent. There is room for it in the narrowest, bleakest life into which God has put the flickering spark of a human soul, a spark that, nourished by His breath, may burst into splendid flame to light and warm the world.

XV.

The Coming Kingdom.

XV.

THE COMING KINGDOM.

Thy kingdom come.

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

WHAT kingdom is that for which Christ prayed, and which, (for His prayers were prophecies,) He foretold?

God's kingdom is obviously an order of things where God's will perfectly fulfils itself, where there are no insurgent or unplastic forces to confuse or delay or antagonize its action, where life mounts to its highest pinnacles of knowledge, holiness and love. Men have therefore concluded that the kingdom of God means heaven, or at least, some place outside of this earth, where the divine forces flow into life without the impediments which here disturb their current. Men are daily praying for the coming of God's kingdom who have no dream or expectation that it will ever come,

till God emancipates life from this earthly shell, and sets it in the beatific light and the society of the seraphim. This gives a remoteness and languor to their prayer which I am sure were never in Christ's prayer: "Thy kingdom come."

He certainly never intended that men should spend their lives in praying for death. The life that God has put on this earth is not such a miserable blunder and horrible perversion, that death is the only escape from the devil's clutches and the only door into God's light and joy. This surely is a childish, ignorant, un-Christian interpretation of God's world and Christ's words. When He prayed for the coming of God's kingdom, He did not mean that God had given up this earth to the demons of misrule and misery, and that the only redemption of man hung in the distant heavens beyond the grave.

What did He mean? What did those Jews to whom He gave the prayer understand Him to mean?

They attached certain definite ideas to the word, kingdom. There it was, very visible

and very palpable, stretching its long, strong arm from the throne on the Tiber, griping the throat of their civic life, pressing them at every turn with some touch of foreign law, or alien custom, or insult to their ancient religion. They themselves had once been a kingdom, and their hearts were aflame as they read in their sacred books, of its kings and heroes and saints, its conquests and surrenders, its splendors and its infamies. The Messiah for whom they looked was to restore the kingdom to Israel. Knowing that this thought was brooding in the minds of those Jews, Christ put into the prayer that He gave them, that petition: "Thy kingdom come."

God's kingdom meant to them a divine organization of life, life on this earth, life in the home, at the bazaar, in the temple, on the throne. Christ, it is true, did not present Himself as the creature of their dreams. He broke their illusions. He spoke of an emancipation and a kingdom, grander than that implied in their aspirations for national sovereignty; but their idea of kingdom He put into His great world-prayer. And there it stands

to-day, echoed round the girdle of the earth. God's kingdom is life organized on the law of God, life not only hereafter, but life here and now, life as it flows to men, day by day, in the relations of the family, the market place, the Church and the State. For the coming of this kingdom of God on earth, Christ prayed, and taught His disciples to pray.

What fathomless depths lie in Christ's words! With every advance of our civilization and knowledge, our plummets of thought are striking deeper into their gulfs of meaning. As never before, we can now take deep-sea soundings in this petition of Christ for the coming of God's kingdom. It is not only a prayer, it is a history; the history of the universe, of this planet, of the manifold life with which God has peopled it.

From the cosmic chaos to the creation of man, the earth has registered on its rocks the prayer for, and the history of, the coming of God's kingdom. Higher and higher, through the geologic ages, life climbed up its colossal ladder to reach a type of being, which would reflect more perfectly the divine life. And

when man appeared, with the image of God imprinted on his nature, life started at a bound on a new series of progression. Of his primeval state, he has left traces in the caves and gravel-beds of the pre-historic ages, and on the pages of God's word. "The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence." Thus the Bible photographs on its page the life of the stone period and the bronze period, whose relics are in our museums.

However we may interpret that brief gleam of Paradisiacal innocence and the story of the Fall, man lapsed from his divine ideal and fell into savagery. The Bible pictures a fact. The whole history of man bears witness to a malign twist, a taint injected somewhere in his career. He is the only being who persistently fails to fulfil his type. But perpetually he has worked toward it. The book of Genesis gives us glimpses of the early stages of the human struggle, and the divine light that broke from time to time upon the struggle, — uncertain gleams, like the sun shining through rifts in a cloud, giving twilight, not noonday;

but ever breaking through larger rifts and lighting up broader areas of human life. From the rudimentary religious ideas and morals of Genesis to the high, clear notes of the later prophets, a long, toilsome march is registered. The kingdom of God was coming, as the purple of the dawn comes up the eastern sky.

But when Christ came, His herald cried: "The kingdom of God is at hand!" Yes, the King then took His place in the procession of the world's history. Christ gave to men the structure, the laws, the forces of His kingdom. But yet he prayed to His Father: "Thy kingdom come." He commanded this prayer to the centuries that were to bear His name. Before Him the kingdom had been coming, and after Him it was still to come. The old marches toward light and righteousness were still to go on; only He placed the feet of men on new levels, and opened their eyes to new summits. In the light that streams from Him, we can see clearly the frontiers, the features, the methods of the kingdom of God.

The kingdom is within you, said Christ. It

is a sovereignty of the soul. It lies in the realm of the desires, the purposes and the affections. But the kingdom has an exterior as well as an interior life. This also He pictured in His parables of the kingdom. Obviously, everything that concerns man concerns also the organization of society in which he lives. The two are interdependent. The man shapes the environment, and the environment shapes the man. The kingdom of God, then, means the development of God's image in man's nature, and the reign of God's law in the organization of man's life.

All along and now, the divine image, ever present, vexes and disturbs the brutal passions and appetites. It seems as if it were something imposed, something alien added to our being. A man cannot consciously do wrong, without feeling the sharp cut of God's image, which is in him, and which he has dishonored. In all men, it suffers blur and disfigurement. Centuries of transmitted vice, of historic and venerated sin, have incrustated it and dimmed its features. But it is a part of our nature, and, through all the Christian

ages, it has been coming out with sharper lines in the lives of men and women.

And what is true of the divine image in the soul is true of the divine law in the organization of life. All along and now, the world resists and tries to ignore the applications of God's law to its industrial and civic life. But step by step it has yielded to the pressures of that law. Immemorial wrongs and shames in the social structure have stood seemingly invincible to its persistent siege and attack. They have excused themselves, palliated themselves, hurled defiance; but in the end the divine law has prevailed. They have been driven from their seats of power, and, if they have lived at all, they have been forced to live a masked and discredited life.

Thus for eighteen hundred years Christ has been fulfilling His prayer. The kingdom of God has been coming to men, taking possession of men, proving its presence and its power in their deepened spiritual vision, their finer loyalty to truth, their keener sense of righteousness, their larger conceptions of God, their richer interpretations of life, their fuller real-

ization of the sanctity of the conscience and the affections, their recognition of the heinousness of consecrated sins, their hatred of ancient tyrannies and stupidities, their repudiation of the artificial lines which separate and alienate men, their quickened sympathy and helpfulness for the great brotherhood of humanity.

They err who say, or who act as if they thought, that the kingdom of the devil, not the kingdom of God, is coming. This earth is Christ's vineyard, and the grapes are not rotting, they are ripening in God's sunlight. The successive generations of men are the grapes from which He presses the wine of His kingdom. As in the story of the marriage at Cana, the wine improves as the banquet of life progresses.

The whole history of the development of man from his primeval savageries and childish idolatries to his grandest achievements in Christian art and science and sainthood is, in short, a record of the coming of the kingdom of God. And the end is not yet. There is no end, till God, and the life of which He is Father and King, shall end. We know not

into what heights of energy man shall grow in the conditions of the life beyond, of which he bears even here the pledges and prophecies. But on this earth, man has measureless possibilities of secular and spiritual advance. He can never leap beyond his nature, but his nature will ever respond to the enrichment and enlargement of its environment.

And this organization of life, which we call civilization, into which he is put, is itself a living thing. It goes through all the processes of a living thing. It is perpetually readjusting itself to new conditions, new exposures, new problems, new conquests. Every age brings to its generation new horizons of thought, new refinements of righteousness, new applications of the eternal moralities to the deepening needs of the personal and social life. There is no finality, or irretrievable defeat, or permanent halt in the unwearied swing of the world's great march. The goal of yesterday is the starting-point of to-morrow.

God is Lord of the to-morrows as He is Lord of the yesterdays, and, shaping all the changes of the world's life, is His changeless Christ;

changeless, yet holding in His purpose and His vision all the progressions of the future. Slowly, yet surely, He is building on this earth that kingdom of God, for whose coming He taught the world to pray.

XVI.

The Christ-tree.

XVI.

THE CHRIST-TREE.

The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.—ST. MATTHEW xiii. 31, 32.

ANYTHING that can be compared to a wheat field, a mustard seed, a yeast-cake, a hidden treasure, a pearl and a fish-net, must have a complex and many-sided life. This is exactly what we must believe of that strange thing of which Jesus spoke so much, "the kingdom of heaven." What did He mean by this majestic phrase, which was continually upon His lips, and which He pictured in so many parables, graphic bits of scenery cut out from the life of nature and the world?

Did He mean the spiritual force which outflows from His person and doctrine into the heart and conscience of men, working in them

moral transformation, touching silently the springs of character? This we might gather from the parable of the leaven. But how, then, shall we interpret the parables of the field that was sown with both wheat and tares, and the net that gathered both good and worthless fish? Did He mean the beatific life beyond the grave? This we might suppose from the parable of the hidden treasure and the goodly pearl, for whose purchase it was worth while for a man to sell all that he had. But this too clashes with those two parables which make the kingdom of heaven include both good and bad men. Did He mean, then, simply His historic Church, the visible organization of His professed followers? A field of mingled grain and brier, a drag-net sweeping through the sea, quite fairly represent the history and condition of the Church. But the hidden leaven, the buried treasure, the priceless pearl, seem to suggest something invisible in its workings, inestimable in its worth, uncompacted of mortal clay, untouched by sin and shame.

The fact of the matter is, Christ's kingdom of heaven means the whole product of His

divine life and work,—the new spiritual truth with which He lit up the sky of men's minds, the new spiritual forces which He poured into men's souls, the visions of the immortal life which He opened beyond the horizons of earth, and, finally, the Church, the visible organization in human history, with its ministry and sacraments and creeds, which bears witness to His divine law and truth, propagates them, gives them voice and feet and hands in the life of the world.

But there is one parable that seems to include all these various aspects of the kingdom of heaven: "Another parable put He forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof."

What a picture is this of the spiritual seed in the heart of a man; the small beginnings, the vital power, the gradual growth of the personal religious life!

At first "it is the least of all seeds." Is not this true? Compare the various forces that surge through our human nature and press upon human life, with that tiny germ of spiritual force which lies in the heart of a boy or girl. From the very first, how the mere physical envelope of the soul shuts in and stifles its life! How clamorously the body cries out and asserts its needs! And then the great world closes in upon the soul, and flings its shadow over the thought and desire. It is a strong, compact, complex world, throbbing with mighty forces, echoing with persuasive voices, decking itself with glittering prizes, laying hold of the life with masterful hands to brand it with its own mark, and shape it after its own interpretations. In comparison with all this; the world's visible might and splendor, its persistent energy, its pressure and thrust, and seduction and tyranny, how slight and feeble a thing seems that vague desire, that dim sense of need, which are the first movements of the spiritual life in the soul! In these strenuous voices, how soft and low is the whisper of God in the ear of conscience!

Yes, the great trees of the world's forest, swinging in the storm, feeding on the sunlight, throw their shadows over the soul; and, unnoticed, oftentimes making no sign, slumbers that tiniest of all seeds, which is the germ of the soul's life, and the secret of its power.

But this spiritual seed has a vitality all its own. It is a living thing, and, like all living things, it has the mysterious power of growth, of nourishing itself on that which surrounds it, of multiplying itself. It holds in it the promise and potency of a force which is the mightiest energy on this earth. What is it that can beat down the insurgent appetites of our nature? What is it that can carry itself with a deaf ear amid all that the world can bring to seduce it or to crush it? That same little seed of spiritual desire, faith, purpose in your soul. Only cherish it and feed it, let it feel the warmth of God's sun, let His rain fall on it, only let it thrust out the life that is in it above the ground, and it will overshadow all that is within you and around you with its boughs. "When it is grown it is the greatest among herbs." There is no power that can

match itself with spiritual power. It has wrestled with all that is in human nature, and all that is in the world, again and again, and overcome it. The world discerns the majesty and the beauty of this strange power that conquers it. It recognizes it and pays it homage. The wielders of this power it places on the thrones of history. Such a stalwart tree lies waiting to be born in that little seed in your soul.

And when it finds its birth, it clothes itself with trunk and limbs, "so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof." A man's religious life, if it be real, is the strongest thing in him. It does not mutilate his nature. It does not weaken down and impoverish its forces. It does not command him to sit, and nurse his soul, while the world sweeps on with its mighty movements and its tireless industries. He has a place and a part in the toil and quest that weave the web of the world's history. His religion is simply the tree of his spiritual being overtopping his life; and all things that are wholesome in his nature and the world,

“come and lodge in the branches thereof.” A man’s religion must be large enough to give shelter to “the birds of the air,” the things that are not essentially a part of it, his natural forces and aptitudes, his traits of temperament, his energy of brain and heart, his domestic affections, his social relations, his profession, his business, his politics, his recreation; and all these, on the other hand, must be of the sort, that can find a kindly lodgment amid the sacred boughs and foliage of his spiritual life.

But the parable of the mustard seed has a larger application than to the personal history of the Christian. It gives us a picture of the Church of Christ. What is this Church but a divine seed planted in the soil of the world’s history? And was it not, when it first fell on the bosom of this earth, the tiniest of seeds? We know something of that old pagan world in which it found a place, the only place which the world could give it then, the cradle of Bethlehem.

It was a mighty, splendid world after its fashion. It had its religion, its philosophy,

its literature, its art, its commerce, its statecraft. Its civilization was matured to the supremest, ripest point to which the social energy and the science of life, working by itself, has ever carried mankind. So ripe, it was ready to drop, you say. Yes, but the force of the slow accumulations of the centuries was in it. It was organized in an epoch which had a genius for organization, with a coherency and a compactness which no civilization has ever attained before or since. Everything that could give strength and permanence to the world-life of humanity belonged to that world-life into which Christ was born.

He came and dropped a tiny seed into the bosom of that life. What was it? Simply His own divine life shrouded in the garb and environment of a Jewish peasant, those three divine years on the highways and streets of Palestine. That was all. The story of that life, its words and deeds, its cross and grave, its forty days after the sepulchre, its last bequest and commission to those eleven men: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in

earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world," — this was the seed He planted in the soil of that old world. There it lay, the life trampled out of it, it was thought, while the immemorial oaks that had stood for ages and sheltered the histories of men flung their boughs over its grave.

Was it not "the least of all seeds," — this Church of the vanished Christ, hid in an upper chamber of Jerusalem? But there was a strange life in it, a life peculiar to itself, of whose nature and potency men could not then even dream. It was the power of God flung into the history of the world; and in the ungenial soil, amid the ancient roots where it fell, it grew. It became a tree of such stalwart vigor and hungry life and spreading branch, that the world could not overlook it or pretend to scorn it. All that was oldest and strongest in the world began to feel the thrust of its creeping roots and sinewy boughs. Time and again,

men sought to hew it down. They could only scar its trunk, pluck off here and there a leaf, till at last that little seed, the relic and inheritor of that mysterious Life in Palestine, filled the earth with its branches, and the winds of heaven made music in its foliage. The civilization of that ancient world dropped its fruits, over-ripened and decayed, beneath those boughs, which had other and richer fruits for men.

And how has it fared with this tree of Christ, since the civilization of the modern world has taken its shape and feature under its shadow? It is on this earth; therefore the storms and droughts of earth have left their record in its history. The corporate life of the Church has not escaped the suggestions of the wheat field sown with tares and the drag-net sweeping the sea. But whatever wounds it may have suffered, however it may have cast unripened fruits, let us remember that it has, in all regards, fulfilled the story of the mustard tree. "The birds of the air have come and lodged in the branches thereof." I want to show you how true this is of the historic Church of

Christ. I can give only dim hints and large generalizations of facts. Through all the history of the Church, the richest things in the life of the world have found lodgment on its boughs.

What is that which is most necessary to the world, even in its secular aspects, aside from the religious and spiritual life? What is the indispensable element and condition of modern civilization? The moralities of the social life, you say. Yes, the moral laws which enforce honesty and truth and courtesy in the dealings of man with man, which enforce love and purity and tenderness in the household, these lie at the basis of all wholesome life, of all possible social life. The integrities that protect the market-place, and the sanctities that protect the hearthstone, without these the world would plunge into chaos. But where in the history of Christendom have they found enunciation, enforcement and sanction? What power has alone been strong enough to shelter them from the selfish greed and the brutal passions of men? History tells us, the chronicles of the times are telling us: the Church of Christ.

"The morality of the New Testament is scientific and perfect," says Ralph Waldo Emerson, no prejudiced judge. The world can never outgrow it; and the world forever needs it.

Again, where have the intellectual advancements of the modern world, up to recent times, found their spring and impulse? For centuries, the learning, the poetry, the science, the statecraft of Christendom was in the hands of the Church. But this states only a fragment of the fact. There is a deeper and more pregnant question. What has shaped the faith, interpreted God and the unseen world to the men who have left their imprint on the intellectual life of these nineteen centuries? There is but one answer: the Church of Christ.

Again, where did art, reborn at last after its burial in the degradations of the later classic forms, first find its voice and body forth its creations? That immortal hunger for beauty, which is just now returning to our spiritual sense, after its long chill in the frost of Puritanism,—where was it first fed? Was it not at the feet of Christ, the ideal of moral beauty? Where did music and painting and sculpture

find their cradle? Was it not beneath the altar of the Church?

Again, where did the modern world discover its ideals, and drink in its impulse for all its social emancipations and reforms? The Church of Christ has been compelled at times to simply palliate the despotisms which the world has fostered; but the spirit of Christ in the Church has been in perpetual revolt. The ideal of the pitiful Christ has all along brooded in its heart, and moulded its visions of the future. It felt that it could not rest, while men suffered inherited degradation, hopeless misery, corroding shame, brutalizing poverty. It must go out on its errand of rescue. It feels now, that it is not itself, if it can shut its ears to the cries of the stricken and the wounded. It must pray and toil and struggle to lift men, all men on the round earth, to a plane of life and a vision of faith, where they can see God and their brother in the face of the divine Christ.

Such are the precious things, that have found lodgment in the broad-spreading branches of the Christ-tree which God has planted in this world. There are deeper things that I have

left unmentioned. The down-reaching of God to the human soul, the up-reaching of the soul into the love and peace of God, — this is the very life of the tree. But for what it nourishes and shelters in the common, daily lives of men, is it not worth all that we can give to it in prayer and toil and treasure?

XVII.

The Human Side of Christianity.

XVII.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF CHRISTIANITY.

*Yea, the sparrow hath found her an house, and the
swallow a nest, where she may lay her young, even
Thy altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God.*

Ps. lxxxiv. 3.

THE religion of Christ is a theology. It would not be a religion except it brought to us a word from God; and it places itself above all other religions, by presenting to our reason all possible proofs, and to our conscience positive proofs, that it brings an authentic word. It would be simply a poem, a philosophy, a scheme of ethics, a contribution to the improvement of the social order, did it not come as a certified voice from that mysterious Power which pulses through the universe, and in whose shadow lie all the sources and issues of our life. Only as a science of God, can it satisfy our deepest needs and touch the inmost springs of our being.

Christianity shows us God, translating His might and love into a dialect that we can read. There is nothing so familiar to us as that subtle, complex thing which makes us what we are, our human nature. With all the mystery that clings to it, it has meanings deep and rich and large, that we can understand. God therefore uttered His Being, as far as it could be uttered, in a human life.

The Incarnation of God in the person of Jesus Christ; upon this stupendous fact rests the massive structure of Christian theology. But mark how this fact glides into its place in the world's history. Study the scenery that it draws about itself, the processes by which it accomplishes itself. Read the story of the birth of Christ. With the exception of the angels carolling in the midnight sky over the hills of Bethlehem, it is a page torn from the common life of an Eastern village. All through, you hear the throbbings of the great heart of our humanity, which beats out from age to age its rhythms of joy and woe, and makes the music of the world. The strong tides that flow through the history of the race,

and bear us all on their currents, beat against, and form an eddy round the cradle of Christ.

There are certain facts which are the warp and woof of life. No advance of civilization can thrust them off the earth. They spring from our nature and social organization. They give the color and the movement to the days. Parenthood, toil, poverty, civic government, science, in large measure make up the life of the world. See how these facts are swept into, and play their part in the narrative of the nativity! What are the figures that stand in the picture?

A mother bending, with the ineffable tenderness of young motherhood, over her new-born child; an artisan who works at his carpenter's bench for his daily bread; shepherds in their sheepskin coats, who have just left their flocks on the hill-slopes outside the village; officials, bearing royal insignia, who have come from Jerusalem or the imperial city on the Tiber to conduct the census; philosophers, students of science, who, in their hunt for truth, have journeyed from the ancient East to that little hamlet nestling among the Syrian hills. What

an epitome of the world's life is gathered within the circle of light that streams from the Child in the manger!

God could have spoken to us without enacting that scene in Bethlehem. He could have uttered His word to man in the dialect of the schools, in those high atmospheres of philosophic thought, where for centuries before the Incarnation, and for centuries since, men have sought to formulate some intelligible statement of the mystery of the universe. But no! His word was a human life flung into the ordinary conditions of human life. It drew into itself and around itself the common instincts, affections, needs and toils of men. It went down to the roots of life. It struck strong and full along the elemental lines of our humanity.

Thus the religion of Christ went forth to its history. It went forth, staff in hand, to the beaten paths of life. It had a message for men lamed and wearied and downtrodden in the tussle of the world. It had a message for life in the workshop, life in the market-place, life at the fireside, life wounded and soiled in the fight with temptation, life fevered and

wasted and ebbing away on beds of pain. It was a theology, but, above all, it was a sweet, strong, divine Life, lived on the face of the earth. It told of God on His unseen throne, but, above all, it told the story of that Life. And it was a story that men understood. They did not have to rummage among the buried bones of forgotten history, or train themselves in subtilties of thought to get at its meaning. It flowed with easy interpretations into the heart and conscience of children, of women sitting by the cradles of their babes, of boys looking out with eager eyes on the untried world, of men doing hot work in the front of the world.

Christianity has its austerities, its heroisms, its renunciations, its solitudes of rapt communion with eternal things. Its ideals walk on peaks of unsullied snow. There is in it an energy of faith which scorns the prizes of the world, and enters the palace of God across the threshold of a hovel. There is in it an unutterable horror of sin. The line of its advance through the Christian centuries is marked with the writhing forms of sin, which it has fought,

and which, if it has not vanquished, it has at least wounded, unmasked and branded with infamy. It has at times, and in fervid and exceptional types of character, been carried, in its struggle for righteousness, into morbid asceticisms and gross exaggerations of Christ's law of self-denial. But it has never lost sight of its real work, and the place where that work was to be wrought. Through all its history, the religion of Christ has brought His pity and peace into our common life, and has hallowed for evermore its daily toils and loves.

Thus to-day it is accomplishing its errand in the world. That manger by which the mother watched, and before which the shepherds and the wise men knelt, has grown into an altar. The stable of the Syrian village has become a shrine. Wherever the modern world beats with the intensest life, and mounts to its highest points of organization and achievement, it has placed in its midst the sanctuary of the Child of Bethlehem; and art, which was born as the handmaiden of that sanctuary, has lavished upon it her inspirations of grandeur and beauty.

Enter the temple of Christ. As you cross the threshold, you pass from the voices and footfalls of the street into a holy silence. Every line and tone of the structure strikes upon your sense with a solemnity. The springing arches and the lofty roof hang in the air like an aspiration and a longing for an unknown life. The emblazoned windows stain the whiteness of the sunlight with the splendid robes and illumined faces of angels and ancient saints. Music hushed in the awe of adoration, or mounting in full-voiced praise, throbs through the air. Every detail and appointment of the place is devised to declare that, while on the earth, it is yet not of the earth. It is strangely unlike, and was meant to be unlike all that you find in the market-place and at the fireside. The noise and glare of the world are tempered into undertone and twilight. It is the shrine of the presence of God, of the mystery of life, of the power of unseen things. The Book, whose words unceasingly echo through the service, was written by hands that thousands of years ago slipped into dust, and is the record of inspired voices

which in olden time spoke of God to the conscience. The priest ascends the steps of the altar. He takes bread and wine, and utters over them words of consecration. He offers them to God in memory and continuation of that all-sufficient sacrifice, which the divine High Priest pleads perpetually before the celestial Mercy-Seat. He distributes them to men as the bread of heaven and the food of the soul. All worship, all prayer, all sacrificial rite, all touch of the spirit of the living God upon the spirit of mortal man, culminate in that tremendous act. Through the gates of that mystery, the church on earth joins in the chant of angels and archangels, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord, God of Hosts. Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory."

What is all this for? For whom is it wrought? For God surely: to keep His majesty and love visible on the face of the earth. But its relationship to God is only the remote side of its relationship to man. It is not only the power and beauty of the divine life translated into the symbolism of earth; it is the divine element in our human life mak-

ing affirmation of itself, asserting its being and reaching out for the nourishment of its being.

Look on those who are bowed before the altar. Who are they? Why do they come? They are men from the counting-room and the shop, toilers in the vast industrial system of modern life; men fresh from their ledgers, their tools of handicraft, their newspapers, their books of the current literature and the science of the day; women who, if they are sometimes excused from the rough work of the world, are nevertheless not excused from the cares and problems of life. They come with their poverty, their trouble, their temptations, their sin. They come to get help in the struggle, some ray of divine light on their shadowed paths. They come to bring their most precious and sacred things, the children whom God has given them, the loves that have grown about the fibres of their hearts, the innocent joys that fill their homes with gladness, the sorrows that sit at their firesides, the anxious thoughts that they carry through the day, the questions that they ask in the dark-

ness, the struggles in the solitudes of their souls, — they come to bring all these to the feet of One, Who has brought to these things the pitiful heart of God, and Who can lift them up into a light that explains them and heals them and sanctifies them. “Yea, the sparrow hath found her an house, and the swallow a nest, where she may lay her young; even Thy altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God.”

The altar of Christ is the asylum of the heart. There the world to-day brings its holy things to find for them shelter and consecration. It has been this for eighteen centuries, and it will be this till the end of time.

XVIII.

Immortality.

XVIII.

IMMORTALITY.

For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. — I COR. xv. 53.

IN the midst of "The Office for the Burial of the Dead," stands St. Paul's argument for the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body. No advance of knowledge or expansion of thought has depreciated, by the weight of a hair, the force of that argument. If the theological dogmatizers of past ages and the theorizers of to-day had conformed their speculations to the large, philosophic spirit of the apostle, they would have been spared many a crude mistake touching the spiritual body and its genesis from the natural body, which has brought discredit on the Christian doctrine of the resurrection and exposed it to the assaults of modern science. It is only in regard to our misinterpretations of the words of Christ and

His apostles, that we need fear the attack of any fact that has been or may ever be discovered. St. Paul, in that fifteenth chapter of his First Epistle to the Corinthians, formulates the doctrine of immortality into a philosophy and a science good for all time.

It seems strange, does it not, that the Church should select that strain of calm, sustained logic for the hour when our eyes are full of tears, and the pulses of our hearts beat fiercely or are almost stilled by our bewilderment and sense of loss.

“ But, for the unquiet heart and brain,
A use in measured language lies :
The sad, mechanic exercise,
Like dull narcotics, numbing pain.”

The Church knows the hour and the need. It is no time for emotional appeals and sentimental dithyrambs. She is a mother, tender and wise. She lifts our grief from its narrow intensity, and bids it walk and gather majesty and strength in the spacious palace of the apostle's thought and vision. She bids our tear-dimmed eyes gaze out through God's great windows of truth on the far distances, where

we catch glimpse of new realms and radiant forms of life.

St. Paul conducts an argument in the presence of our dead. Yes! His words march with irresistible tread to their inexorable conclusion; but the conclusion breaks into a song, as the stem of a plant breaks into a flower: "O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory?" The religion of Christ stands at the door of the sepulchre, and sends into the darkness a note of triumph.

Into the closely-knit chain of his argument the apostle welds this link: "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." Note the force of that word, "must." It implies obligation, necessity, inevitableness. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption;" therefore, "this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." St. Paul is proving the necessity of a spiritual body; and, from the way in which he contrasts it with the natural body, we may get some vague conception of its nature, its capaci-

ties and its attributes. In a certain way, it is a reproduction of that body. It may be, and probably is, matter in a sublimated form. But it is not flesh and blood; and it does not partake of the corruption that inheres in flesh and blood. "This mortal must put on immortality," the apostle says. While his argument concerns primarily the differentiation between the natural body and the spiritual body, it is evident that it has a larger reach, and concerns the general question of our immortality.

"This mortal must put on immortality." Why? The world is asking the question eagerly, anxiously. If we could answer it beyond cavil or challenge, the restless, gnawing worm of doubt would be plucked from the heart of faith. A stream from unseen mountains would flow into the world's thought, of such volume and momentum that it would submerge the ordinary interests of life, and sweep men into new currents of desire and enterprise. Do you suppose that men would toil and suffer and sin for the paltry prizes of this life as they do, if they were positively sure of another life? With all their hopes and

half-beliefs touching the after-world, there is a lurking doubt which tempts them to make the most of this world. In regard to some of them, the doubt swindles them out of both worlds.

Can we, then, prove our immortality? It depends upon what you call proof. We cannot prove it as we prove a geometrical problem, or a law of chemistry or mechanics. The materials of our reasoning lie in other planes of fact. Therefore the processes of our reasoning are different. The conclusions cannot be put in the snug, precise form in which we state scientific truths. This is true, not only of our arguments for immortality, but of our reasoning touching all the facts that concern our deepest and highest life. You cannot, by triangulation, prove your mother's love, or, by chemical analysis, measure the emotional value of a tear. The sort of proof that gives us our belief in the future life is the same sort of proof that enables us to live this life sweetly and vigorously. We do not have to call in mathematics and formal logic to justify our daily loves and trusts; why need we call them in when we

speak of immortality? Yet our belief is something more than emotion. Aside from the vision of the risen Christ, which lay behind the triumphant assurance of the apostle's words, there are things close about us, common facts and experiences, which enable us to say: "This mortal must put on immortality."

We must not over-count, neither must we under-count the evidential value of our desire for immortality. Hunger means food, not in regard to the penniless tramp, who gazes into the window, where the prosperous man sits at his feast; but in regard to the general order and adjustment of things in the universe. But there is something in man touching immortality deeper than desire.

The bottommost thing in animate nature is that blind, unreasoning force which we call instinct. We attribute it, perhaps by a figure of speech, to plants; but, at all events, it runs through all the animal world. When we study how undeviatingly it pushes unconscious purpose to unconscious result, we cannot but conclude that it is the most mysterious thing in nature. Without knowledge or deliberation

or training, it works with a prevision and precision which utterly transcend the highest efforts of reason, and which, from the standpoint of reason, are simply a miracle. The instinct of a worm or an ant or a bird is as unerring as the word of a God-inspired prophet. We are just beginning to learn what a large play instinct has in our human nature. All our vital processes, and a large percentage of our emotional and intellectual life, have their origin in the realm of the unconscious. In fact, the roots of our life are buried in the soil where the instincts lie. It is only the leafage and fruit that emerge in the atmosphere of consciousness, where reason has play and determines results. In a rough way it may be said that the instincts breed force; the reason gives direction to the force.

Now I do not think it can be denied that there is in man an instinct of immortality. It may, in certain instances, be stunted or perverted. There are artificial and corrupted conditions of life, which tend to suppress this instinct, as they tend to suppress other instincts; but even where it ceases to act as

an inspiring hope, it generally survives as a haunting fear. Grotesque forms of a belief in immortality are found in the most savage races. Of course it does not imply a spiritual habit of thought or a decent habit of life. But the more highly developed the belief in immortality, the higher you find the type of morality in personal conduct and social organization. When we consider the inerrant action of the instincts, what shall we say of this conviction of immortality, which, in its universality, spontaneity and persistence, has all the characteristics of an instinct? Does it not, like other instincts, have the accents of a prophet's voice?

But our belief in immortality rests not simply on an instinct, but on reason; not the logical faculty, but the attribute of our nature which gives us our sense of personality, which lies behind all our thinking and desiring and willing, and gives them unity, structure and method. This reason in man is his distinctive mark. It sets him apart from the brutes, as his physical instincts ally him to the brutes. Man has reason. There is no question of that,

notwithstanding the diseased brain, and enfeebled will, and capricious passions that we find in the world. The question, the crucial question, on which all morality and religion hang, is: Has the universe reason? Is there anything above and within nature like the rational faculty which nature has lodged in us? It seems absurd to ask the question. But this is the absurdity of atheism.

There is certainly in nature a rational *process*. The universe is obviously not a tiger's leap or a fool's play or a maniac's dance.^a From the march of a planet to the embroidery of an insect's wing, it shows order, structure, purpose, adaptation of means to ends. There is no exception to, or deviation from the reign of law. A rational process like this, permeating the universe, obviously implies a rational faculty behind the process. This means what we mean by God. St. John, in the proem of his Gospel, calls God "The Logos," the Word or Reason, by whom all things were created, and in whom is the life of all things. It is this reason in nature that makes our science possible. Man's reason is the key which,

fitted in the lock of the divine reason, unlocks the doors of nature. Now this element of reasonableness in the universe is the ground for our belief that "this mortal must put on immortality." Why?

In the first place, immortality is necessary for the fulfilment of our nature. God, the Supreme Reason, has justified Himself in every form of life which He has created. Every form fulfils its type and its purpose in the colossal interplay of the universe, — every form of life, except one, — man. As far as we know, he is the solitary failure, the only string in the harp of nature which is sprung and gives a false note. On this earth, at least, he is the only creature that fails to fulfil its type in this mortal life. Not one in the history of the race, save that transcendent One before Whom we bow in boundless love and worship, has actualized the idea, which God had in His mind when He made man.

We can read God's mind concerning us by the nature which He has given us. It has dreams and possibilities of goodness, power and joy, which no man on this earth has ever

reached. On the contrary, the great majority of mankind have dropped hopelessly from the ideal type of their nature. Look at the history of the race! Look at the great masses of men to-day! What does the onflowing stream of life bear on its bosom? With what is it freighted as it pours into the boundless ocean, where lies the eternal shadow? Moral shipwrecks, wreckages of high hopes, impulses and resolves, lives broken and stained with the dashings of the waves. To get the measure of all this, to get the full discrepancy between man the ideal and man the fact, you must look into your own heart. There you see the wounds, the defeats, the surrenders in the conflict between the upward and the downward forces in your nature. If death extinguish the life, with all its incompletions and wreckages, what becomes of the Supreme Reason that devised the life? It is bad workmanship to make a machine which invariably breaks down in the work for which it is designed. It indicates imperfection of plan or imperfection of construction. This is the accusation which you lodge against God, the Cosmic Reason, if you

deny to man a future life in which he shall round out his destiny and fulfil his nature.

Again, immortality is necessary for the rectification of life. Justice is the root of morality. The universe is immoral, if Justice be not on the throne. Evidently the administration of justice is not completed on this earth. Smooth it over as we may, life is not, and never has been, parcelled out to men impartially. The vast majority are handicapped in the race. They have not the remotest chance of being in at the distribution of the prizes. It is not the differences of wealth and position that constitute the most grievous inequalities of life. Look at the transmissions of diseases and vices which flow into, and taint the bodies and souls that men inherit! Look at the miseries that men suffer vicariously for the crimes of others! Look at the administration of rewards and punishments in this life! It is not once, it is often, that vice marches to its coronation and virtue mounts the scaffold. Nero fiddles in his palace, while the Christian martyrs are wrapped in flame to serve as torches in his palace-garden; the world not infrequently

re-enacts this mystery of injustice, with civilized refinements, and softened lights and shadows. We talk of the immorality of physical nature. In its thunderbolts and sunbeams, it makes no discrimination between the just and unjust. Is there not a strain of this in the history of mankind? Must there not then be something beyond? If Eternal Reason be on the throne, Eternal Justice is also on the throne; and He suffers the maladjustments of this life, only because He has ordained an after-life, in which the morality of the universe shall be vindicated.

Finally, immortality is necessary for the justification of all that makes our mortal life grand and beautiful, our loves and worships and consecrations and heroisms. However our other faculties may stammer, Love speaks loud and clear. It claims immortality. It is only when the capacity of deep and tender love dies out of a man, that he surrenders his belief in immortality.

And does not Love sit with Reason and with Justice on the throne of things? Can the Almighty Father fling His pleading children

into the gulf of nothingness? Will not God then sit in His desolated immortality, like Rachel in Rama weeping for her children? No, it cannot be. We move in this life wrapped in shadows. Our loved ones drop from our side into the great shadow. But we

“Hear at times a sentinel

That moves about from place to place ;

And whispers in the vast of space

Among the worlds, that all is well.

And all is well, though faith and form

Be sundered in the night of fear ;

Well roars the storm to those that hear

A deeper voice across the storm.”

XIX.

Glorified Wounds.

XIX.

GLORIFIED WOUNDS.

And when He had thus spoken, He showed them His hands and His feet. — ST. LUKE xxiv. 40.

IN the accounts of the appearances of Christ after His resurrection, brief and fragmentary as they are, it is evident that the writers believed that they dealt with a fact, not with a myth or an allegory or a romance.

The first apostles of Christianity for eighteen hundred years have stood in the witness-box before the august court of history, and their testimony has left in the minds of the most acute and critical of their world-wide audience the conviction that they were honest men, who told a straightforward story, each reciting his observation of the fact from his personal point of view, without collusion or instruction, and with no motive except the compelling force

of the fact, which brought the witnesses to persecution and martyrdom.

But it may be urged that the disciples had prepossessions which anticipated and welcomed the resurrection of their Lord. So far is this from the truth that, without exception, they greeted the report and the evidences of the fact with utter incredulity. They demanded proofs specific and irrefutable; and gave it a belief which, if in the end complete, was at first reluctant and exacting.

When the risen Christ uttered His salutation, "Peace be unto you!" to the disciples cowering in the room with the bolted doors, He faced a group of sceptics. A sceptic convinced makes a trustworthy witness.

The scene in the upper chamber was the fifth appearance of Jesus after His resurrection. How simple and matter-of-fact is the recital! How illustrative of our common human nature are the mingled fright and doubt of the apostles! We men of to-day, standing in the place of those ten Jews (St. Thomas was absent), would have experienced the same emotions. After the tragedy on the

cross, they had abundant reason for their supposition that the presence before them was an apparition, a disembodied spirit. But Christ at once furnished them with the proofs of the reality of the fact, with which they went forth to the world, and upon which have been built eighteen centuries of Christian history. "And He said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when He had thus spoken, He showed them His hands and His feet."

Let us understand clearly the significance of this scene. On those hands and feet were the wounds of the crucifixion-spikes. Christ showed them to His apostles as evidences of His identity. They were incontestable proofs that the object of their vision was no ghost or phantom or optical illusion, but the veritable body, which two days before they had seen hanging on the cross. But those wounds, being this, were something more. That body which stood before the apostles, while it was

the same torn body that was laid in the sepulchre, was changed, spiritualized, glorified. It had assumed powers and splendors which transcended the possibilities of ordinary matter. But there on that glorified form were the cross-marks. The transformations of the resurrection, Christ's exaltation into a realm of forces beyond this earth, had not obliterated them. They too were changed, spiritualized, glorified; but there they were on His hands and feet: the tokens of the sacrificial passion, which was the motive of His life, and by which He has ascended the throne of the world's love and worship. They were therefore something more than the proofs of His identity. They were the scars of His battle and the mementos of His triumph.

The meaning of those transfigured wounds in the risen Christ, it will not be amiss to transfer to the wounds of our common human nature; that nature which Christ carried through all its exposures from the cradle to the grave, and which He thereby fulfilled and interpreted.

The wounds that we bear in the conflict of life, and the glorification of those wounds;

that is my theme. It opens lines of thought which are rich in suggestion, which will enlarge our horizons and will give us hope and courage in what we are called to suffer and to do.

The life of Christ, like the life of every one of us, was a battle. It was a force, flowing from the heart of God, lodged in a human life and blending with the forces that make human history. I need not enter into the theological problems of that transcendent personality. With all His divine affiliations and offices, Christ was a complete man, and lived a man's life, sinless, yet otherwise subject to the ordinary conditions of our life. All the forces which beat upon us, bringing struggle and suffering of mind and body, beat upon Him supremely, with their most lacerating touch. He was the revelation of God; but, besides this, He was the revelation of man, man beating back and beating down the forces that taint him and degrade him and mutilate him; and the very fact that Christ set Himself against the insistent flow of those forces exposed Him, above all men, to their assault. It was this

fact that brought Him to the cross. Those spike-wounds and that spear-wound were the results and tokens of His life-battle. Well, after the crucifixion came the resurrection, after the seeming defeat, the eternal triumph. There He stood, emerging from the overflowing wave of death, still bearing in His glorified body the wounds of the battle. He was identified by the nail-marks of His cross. It does not require much effort to read all this into the life that is appointed to each of us.

We hear much of the struggle for existence. The phrase is overworked, but it holds a truth. Life is a battle, and it is a battle that brings wounds, wounds even with victory. No man ever stood in the flaming front of the fight where Christ stood; but whatever our cowardice or our treason, we cannot escape the conflict, and we all bear its tokens.

It does not imply the cynic pessimism of Schopenhauer, to make the cross the symbol of life. The cross, as we know, meant to Christ, and may mean to us, conquest as well as suffering. On the Calvary of life, as on that Judæan hill, there are three crosses; and every man

bears the nail-prints of his own cross. Instead of the divine Christ, he may represent the thief that repented or the thief that reviled; but, in any event, the spike-wounds of life's struggle are in his hands and feet. And these spike-wounds are his own. They make him what he is. Whether his crucifixion be that of the thief or of the Christ, it leaves upon him wounds which distinguish him from all other men, which even death cannot efface, and by which, doubtless, he may be recognized through eternity.

But let me put this truth in words, where our thought will be less overshadowed by the tragic figure of the cross. Each one of us has a distinctive nature, is called to a distinctive life, and, as a result, bears distinctive marks. Each soul enters into this mortal life and goes out of it with a personality that is unique and without duplicate. God never repeats Himself. There is no need. The elements that make up our human nature have an infinite range of combination. This gives to every man a peculiar value. He must not scorn himself or misuse himself. His duty is to

train his selfhood to its highest pitch of power and service.

But a man has something besides, yet growing out of, his personality. He has character. What is this but the net result, the configuration and combination of the marks which his life makes on the specific type of human nature that he inherits? For the nature he is not responsible; but for the marks he is responsible. He chooses the cross, the thief-cross or the Christ-cross, on which he receives the marks. In the last result, therefore, we are the sculptors of our character. We carve and trace the lines, which give us moral feature in this life and in the life to come. For character, our fashioning of our personality, our acquired and responsible selfhood, is the deathless part of us. The decays of death cannot touch it. The lines which we give it, with which we debase it or ennoble it, persist beyond the grave. Like Christ, we carry the scars of our cross into our immortality.

But the wounds of Christ have another lesson. They registered in Christ, as they register in every man, pain, agony, loss of power,

loss of life. But as they gleamed on that risen body, they also registered victory, joy, expansion of power, enrichment and exaltation of life. Those nail-prints were at once the badges of Christ's sorrow and Christ's triumph. The two things were different stages of the same thing. The one was the stepping-stone to the other. In the narratives of the evangelists and in the theology of St. Paul, it is stated, in manifold phrases, that Christ won His kingdom through suffering. The mystic verse of the Psalmist found in Him its fulfilment: "He shall drink of the brook in the way; therefore shall He lift up His head."

We do not use a metaphor, we simply state the fact, when we say that Christ's cross is His throne. While we cannot fathom the inner depths of words like these: "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered," they obviously imply that the human nature of Christ gained vision, faculty, spiritual force and mastery through suffering. We are distinctly told that by suffering He was fitted for His high-priesthood of humanity. His own blood was the

anointing oil of His priestly consecration. Certain it is, that through suffering He acquired His moral empire in history, His kingship over the heart and conscience. He drew into His divine life the sharpest thorns and spikes and spears of our human lot. He proved to men what beauty and what grandeur could be in toil, pain, humiliation and death. Thus He fulfilled His words: "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." On the cross, Christ showed the world the deepest thing in the heart of God, sacrificial love. Therefore it is that the world worships at the cross.

Power is begotten of suffering. This, then, is the lesson of those glorified scars; a lesson of tremendous import to us who are flung into a life exposed to such ingenious forms of suffering.

Why is it that men of earnest, strenuous natures are generally suspicious of joy and laughter? In a high, broad view of life, it is manifestly a mistake. The largest souls of the race have borne in their blood, and wrought into their work, the fresh gladness of childhood. The masterpieces of the world's art and litera-

ture have been created in joy and freedom. They betray ease, spontaneity, lightness of touch.

But, after all, the highest thrones are occupied only at long intervals. Below the line of the supreme geniuses, men acquire intellectual and moral power, put forth intellectual and moral fruitage, only as they feel the goad of toil and the sting of pain. "Perfect through suffering," this was written of us as well as of Christ. It is, in part, the solution of "the riddle of this painful earth." It seems as if our fierce questions beat against mute heavens. Why is this poverty, this struggle, this bereavement, this disaster, this grievous wound in body and soul, through which my life-blood is flowing? Why does the happy sunlight mock my sorrow? Why does life smite her children with such pitiless hands? But the heavens are not silent. Those wounds on the glorified Christ answer these questions. And, through all the history of suffering, men have proved and justified the answer. Sorrow, evermore, nurses her child, Power. The child on her bosom explains the mother, — the

Madonna of life. Everywhere, by all the firesides of earth, she sits, holding in her arms her interpretation.

Everywhere the law holds. Power is born of pain. The song that moves the world, — the hot pulses of the singer throb through it. The discovery that unlocks to men a new kingdom in nature's forces, — it was made by one who searched for it with tireless eyes, on his hands and knees. The banner of the foe, — the soldier who brings it into the camp staggers and falls in the pool of his blood. The mastery of self, the conquest of passion, spiritual vision, moral ascendancy, a strong, wise, tender, patient manhood, the trophy of life; this, too, is the purchase of long watches and fierce battles. There are wounds on the victor. The deep verse of Goethe hints the truth, but it does not fully utter it: —

“Who ne'er his bread in sorrow ate,
Who ne'er the mournful midnight hours,
Weeping upon his bed hath sat,
He knows ye not, ye unseen powers.”

We must go to Christ for the full history of the transfiguration of suffering, the glorifica-

tion of life's wounds; especially those wounds which are the deepest of all: those sacrificial wounds which we receive, not in battle for ourselves, but in battle for others, the child we love, the friend we trust, the cause we have espoused. Men and women stand in history and in common life, splendid with these sacrificial wounds. But none stand on the divine summit where He stands. And the supreme wound of life, the final wound through which it glides from this earth; only He, Whom those apostles saw on the yonder side of the grave, can reveal to us the glorification of death.

XX.

The Consummation.

XX.

THE CONSUMMATION.

For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.

ROM. viii. 19.

IT was an unsightly root, for which the gardener had paid a large price, and from which he expected a rare bloom. He buried it in the earth, having enriched the soil. Meanwhile the root, as it lay in what seemed its sepulchre, fell to thinking about itself. Of course it had no brain, and its thinking was vague, hardly worth the name; but I will put it into words as best I can.

“Why I am thrust into this dismal grave,” it said, “I cannot tell; except, it may be, I am so like a stone or clod of earth, that the gardener attaches no value to me, and has flung me here to rot and perish in the darkness. He has made a mistake, I fear. This

is not my place. I am not a stone or clod. I am alive. I feel within me a strange longing for the sun and air. There, it seems to me, I belong. There is something in me that I cannot quite understand, but it is moving in me all the time, and it fills me with fever and unrest and a hunger for the sunshine. This life that I am now living cannot be my only life. It is disturbed by the hints and beginnings of another life, which is struggling to free itself from this ugly husk that I wear.

“There is a dream that I am perpetually dreaming, and cannot drive away. It seems as if I were no longer a black root, hid in the earth, but a beautiful flower, unfolding its white splendor in the joy and glory of the sun, and scenting the air with its fragrant breath. It is a senseless dream, I know. Everything about me disproves it. How it came to me I cannot tell. But here it is. It is a part of me. It began, I think, when I first felt the warmth striking through the ground above me. And now I dream it day and night. Why did the gardener put me in this dark underworld, with this strange life

moving in me, and this wild dream haunting me?"

We know how the questioning root solved its problem; how, after a while, a green blade emerged from the husk, and worked its way through the ground, and grew into a stalk, which one summer day crowned itself with a flower that rewarded the gardener for all his care and waiting.

The root verified its dream. Shall we ever verify our dream?

The life that is given us on this earth we all feel is an unfinished life. It does not explain itself or fulfil itself where it is. It has hungers which nothing on earth can satisfy. It has powers which give hint of a development and fruition which are never realized. Evidently our nature is too large for this world in which it is put. It seems like an idea, which is struggling for speech and is never fully uttered. It is like a root buried in the ground, feeling in itself the movements of a life whose home is in the atmosphere and light above the ground. Will the root, which we are, ever give birth to the flower of which it dreams?

“The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.” In this sentence and its context, St. Paul describes, and meant to describe, our condition in this present chapter of our history. Are there no other chapters yet to be written? Is the “earnest expectation” of the shrub fulfilled, and does man’s come to naught?

Then is he the only instance of a type of life which God has projected, and yet failed to make provision for. If man, with his immortal hungers and possibilities, has merely his life on this earth, he is the only creature, as far as we know, that God has fashioned, which invariably fails to complete its history and fulfil its type. He is the only broken promise that we can find in all the manifold ranges of life in the universe.

It is the recognition of this, that gives to men such a deep-rooted and persistent conviction of a life beyond the grave. It is not the only argument, but it is one of the strongest arguments in the proof of our immortality. And it is an argument whose force the teach-

ings and speculations of our modern science are, day by day, enabling us more fully to appreciate.

Christ opened His great world-prayer with the words: "Our Father, Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come." Will it strike you strangely, if I say that our science has been engaged of late in writing a commentary on this invocation and these two petitions of our Lord's Prayer; and, in doing this, has given an enlarged foothold and outlook to our hope of immortality? Let us look at this a moment. The instruments of science of course are fitted only for explorations in the life of the physical universe. She can answer neither "yes" nor "no," when she is questioned regarding a life that lies beyond her vision. But she has taught us the methods in which nature works; and these methods show that, somewhere in the inmost heart and supreme height of nature, there is intelligence and purpose and loving care. In other words, she has taught us that God articulates His ideas, that He works out His conceptions, that He provides for every type of being a range

of life suited to its powers. She repeats, as plainly as the language which she uses will permit, the name which Christ uttered, full and clear, "Our Father, Who art in Heaven."

Again, our modern science is disclosing to us the unfathomable depths of mystery that open everywhere in nature. She confesses that the universe refuses to answer her deepest and most important questions; that the secrets of mind and life and force retire before her instruments into recesses, which she can never hope to explore. All life, she tells us, has its sources in the unseen. It glides into an abyss, on the verge of which she stands baffled and silent. That abyss is the realm of religion. It is the deep where God dwells. Christ spake the only word that can break the silence: "Hallowed be Thy name."

Yet again. The recent exponents of science have formed a theory of the universe which, while it fails to account for everything, has much to say for itself, and has furnished the lines on which the greater part of the scientific thought of the day is moving. All life is the product of evolution, science tells us. There

is a mysterious force in nature which is ever climbing upward, elaborating from a lower type a higher, richer and more complex type of being. There are breaks, sudden leaps, acquisitions of faculty, which we cannot explain. But this much is proven: the history of life is an onward march, in which it is continually making new conquests, and building its strongholds on higher levels of power. When it will end, to what refined conditions of being, to what unknown ranges of energy life will climb in the oncoming ages, we cannot even conjecture.

In this theory, what has science done but illustrate the story of creation told on the first page of our Bible, and remake the ladder of life, after the pattern that the inspired historian and liberator of Israel indicated four thousand years ago? And how sympathetically, and with what profound suggestions, this theory flows into that prayer which Christ put on the lips of men, and for whose fulfilment God is shaping the history of the world and the veiled centuries of the future: "Thy kingdom come." In larger ways than we dream, the

kingdom of God is coming. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."

They err who say that Knowledge is the foe of Faith. Her quests may lead her into regions, where for a time she loses sight of the temple. In the keenness of her hunt, she may forget to worship; but at last she brings her trophies to the altar, and serves as the hand-maiden of Faith. Do you not see that science, while she brings no positive proofs, furnishes a rich subsoil of fact, in which our hope of immortality can strike its roots and find nourishment? She tells us these three things: first, that God never neglects to mature and provide for the types of being which He has created; second, that life everywhere glides into mystery; third, that the stream of life, which flows through the universe, is perpetually surging upward to higher planes and finer faculties.

Now against this background of scientific fact, let us put those great words of the Christian apostle: "I reckon that the sufferings of

this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."

Does not this sublime picture drawn by St. Paul fit into the frame that science furnishes? What a tremendous vista of thought it opens! The whole of God's creation, through the countless æons of its history, is yearning and laboring to give birth to a new and glorified life. It is destined to attain that life, when man, in whom the highest forces of

the creation are lodged, is delivered from "the bondage of corruption," and enters into "the glorious liberty of the children of God." This is the meaning of the struggle, the conflict, the suffering, that runs through the universe and is the inheritance of all created things. In man, the pain of creation rises to its height, for in him the fair and majestic life, which is yet unborn, is struggling for realization in the "manifestation of the sons of God."

How the whole fabric of nature, the evolution of life on the face of this earth, the development of man from the dim beginnings of history, his weary marches through the centuries, his conquests of thought and art and civilization, won at the cost of so much agony of toil and torrents of blood, how all this stands illumined and transfigured in the light of that divine torch, which St. Paul holds up against the universe!

And this little life that comes to each of us, with its loves and laughters, its hopes and faiths, its spiritual hungers and ideals, intertangled with its cares and labors and tears and losses and defeats, how the meaning of it is

disclosed, how the mystery of it is solved in the splendor of that torch!

“The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.” The root will bear its flower, this root of the universe, this root of our mortal nature. God did not put in man this exquisite energy of life to thrust it into ruin and nothingness. He will fulfil its prophecy. Christ hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. We cannot explain the life except by the immortality.

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